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HARVEST ON THE PRAIRIES

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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

*Centennial History of the
Baptist Conference of Illinois
1856-1956*

HARVEST ON THE
PRAIRIES

By C. GEORGE ERICSON

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*That both he that soweth
and he that reapeth
may rejoice together*

JOHN 4:36





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THE PIONEERS

The valiant few who met to pray,
To plan, to work, to pray again,
Saw visions of a church of God,
 Their sabbath home.

They in the small beginning
Walked the way of faith with God:
Blazed trails by toil and tears,
 By loving sacrifice.

Their number grew each year,
They saw their cherished hopes fulfilled.
Some labored long: some quickly went
 To their reward.

God bless their hallowed memories,
Which speak to us in whispers sweet,
Then like a clarion's wakening cry
 Call us to service.

Ours the unfinished task,
The choice, the privilege
To do His will and walk His way
 As they have done.

Give us the courage, Lord, and faith
That we like them, may dream of victory,
Then strive to make our dreams come true
 Till Jesus comes.

Oh, wondrous day of joy and glory
When Thy “well done” shall be our recompence.
Then shall we praise Thee, yea adore Thee,
 In our eternal home.

MARY OSTLING

FOREWORD

One hundred years ago a sower went out to sow. In the hearts of men and women, early settlers in the small towns of Rock Island and Moline on the Illinois prairie, he scattered the precious seed of God's Word. Heroically, sacrificially, expectantly he toiled, not without encouraging results.

But if Gustaf Palmquist, the stalwart pioneering sower, could return for the Illinois Conference Centennial celebration in Moline, what he would see, hear and read of spiritual progress would certainly make him feel on earth a joy akin to that in heaven. The seed sown on the prairies during the past decades has yielded a hundredfold. Especially rich has been the harvest in recent years. Instead of the two churches with 62 members in what could be termed the Illinois Conference of one hundred years ago, that same Conference today comprises a membership of 7,200 in 40 churches permeated with a desire to stake further claims for the Lord, who has given the increase.

The story of years of faithful sowing, of loving sacrifice, of heartbreaking failures, of thrilling successes, and of inspiring hope is vividly told in this attractive jubilee book. Connected with the Baptist Conference Headquarters for more than a third of the century involved, C. Geo. Ericson, the author, has also during that time been enthusiastically active in various phases of the Illinois Conference work. Personal observation, therefore, as well as diligent research and a very readable style of writing are combined in the making of this thorough and inspiring account of seedtime and harvest on the prairies.

Readers will thank God for His blessing and wish for the Illinois Conference even greater accomplishments in days ahead — to His glory.

MARTIN ERIKSON

INTRODUCTION

Sixty years ago a committee of three was appointed by the Illinois Conference to prepare a history of the Conference. This committee, of which Dr. C. G. Lagergren was the chairman, was commissioned to publish such a history for the fiftieth anniversary of the General Conference in 1902, which was also an anniversary year for Illinois, since the first church was founded in our state. When for some reason no history was published that year, the historical committee proposed that it be prepared for the fiftieth anniversary of the Illinois Conference as such in 1906. Although a great deal of material was gathered for that purpose, the history was never published. This is therefore the first history of the Baptist Conference of Illinois.

The historical committee for the centennial consists of C. Geo. Ericson, chairman; Editor Martin Erikson; Dr. Martin Johnson, and Mrs. Oscar E. Ostling. It was evident to the committee that if we were to have a history at the time of the centennial, the work would have to be started as soon as possible and by somebody interested in history. Dr. J. O. Backlund was engaged to write it and had made a good start when illness prevented him from continuing his research and writing. After Dr. Backlund's homegoing, the committee asked me to complete the task.

The opportunity of recording the sowing and harvesting on God's great prairies has been a most pleasant labor of love. I am grateful to Dr. Backlund for the material he gathered and his notes of reference. Without this preliminary work I would not have been able to accomplish as much as has been done amidst otherwise crowded days of

duties. Then, too, there is very little preserved in writing or print from the first three decades of our Conference history. We have in our possession all the Conference minutes from 1885 to the present time. That material has been invaluable. Dr. Lagergren reported in 1901 to the Conference that the minutes for the years 1861, 1870, 1871, 1873-1877, 1879-1884, were lost. The minutes for the intervening years were known to him in 1901 and presumably placed in the Seminary archives. To my regret I have not been able to locate them. In 1898 Dr. Lagergren reported that A. P. Hanson had written a manuscript on the history of the Illinois Conference for the years 1856-1863, and that Lars Peterson had prepared a history covering the years 1864-1865. It is possible that these valuable documents are somewhere in the Seminary archives.

To the young generation and especially to those who are not of Swedish descent, the content of this history may seem too factual and too "Swedish" to be interesting reading. But we cannot alter history. Our Conference work was begun by Americans from Sweden and continued along national lines for three-fourths of the century. Today our churches are altogether American and our God-given mission knows no national boundaries. For those who wish to read about our early history in the form of a story, we would like to call attention to Rachael Borne's prize novel, "Greater Than All."

Harvest on the Prairies is written with a view of praising and glorifying God for what He has done through His laborers on the field. Some have planted, others have watered, but God has given the increase. The full measure of the harvest will be revealed to us on the day of the great ingathering.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lars Peterson".

PART ONE

THE CONFERENCE

CHAPTER ONE

PRECEDING EVENTS

IN AUGUST, 1851, Gustaf Palmquist arrived in America. Trained as an educator, he had served in that capacity in Stockholm, Sweden. There he came under the influence of the evangelical movement which was stirring within the state church. Leaving his homeland in June, 1851, his purpose was to render spiritual service to a group of like-minded people from the province of Helsingland. Coming to Galesburg, Illinois, two months later, he found his congregation dispersed into several states, and his plans had to be changed accordingly. For a time he lived the life of an itinerant Lutheran preacher.

From the minutes of the First Baptist Church of Galesburg we glean some interesting facts regarding the Swedish Baptists in that city at the time Gustaf Palmquist resided there. The First church had been organized in 1847. In the early part of 1852 the church experienced a heaven-sent revival which also stirred the baptismal waters on many occasions. In June twenty-nine were baptized, among them four Swedes. The following week seventeen took a similar step and among them were six Swedes. On June 27 twenty-three followed Christ in baptism and among them were Gustaf Palmquist and five other Swedes.

The officiating pastor was A. Gross of the First Baptist Church and the baptistry Cedar Fork Creek, a small woodlands stream just outside the city, where the Santa Fe railway station now is located. The minutes state further that

in 1857 forty-two Swedes asked for their letters to organize a Swedish Baptist church. L. L. Frisk, pastor in Rock Island, was chairman of the organization meeting.

Previously, however, Palmquist had given much thought and earnest study to the entire subject of baptism and the life and structure of the Christian church. More study of the fundamentals of faith followed his baptism. Exactly a month later he was ordained to the Gospel ministry by the church, which for the time being had become his spiritual home. The special charge given him at his ordination was "to preach the Gospel to the Swedes in North America," in all reason a comprehensive enough charge for any man, and a wide enough field for a man even of Palmquist's capacity and spiritual stature.

The choice of field had to be determined by the newly ordained minister. From previous visits he learned that in Rock Island were many of his countrymen and many who needed the Gospel he had been commissioned to preach. Accordingly, to Rock Island he went. There the beginnings of Swedish Baptist work was made by this pioneer, a man who had no backing of any church or denominational body, who was entirely on his own resources, who had received no promise of financial support—and for quite some time received none.

PALMQUIST IN ROCK ISLAND

Beginning his work in Rock Island two days after his ordination, he entered on his mission with a holy zeal. We read in a statement found on the first page on the Rock Island church record:

"The Lord accompanied His word with his blessings and power, so that Brother Palmquist on August 8, 1852, had

the privilege of baptizing three willing followers of Christ---August Theodore Mankee, Peter Soderstrom and Fredrika Boberg. On August 13 these three persons formed themselves into a church, which became known as the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island."

If Palmquist's charge had been impressively comprehensive, the baptistry in which the first fruits of the Swedish Baptist work of America were buried with Christ was also wide and impressive. For it was the "Father of Waters," the vast Mississippi River, that was made to serve the purpose of these early followers of Christ.

Impressive as an indication of faith was also the fact that the two men and one woman, who had thus received Christian baptism, were prepared to undertake the responsibilities of a church organization.

Many a church of our own generation might well envy the parent church in Rock Island its growth in membership, for on September 26 of the same year three more members were added by baptism: Anders Boberg of Rock Island, Carl Johanson and Anders Norelius of Moline, thus doubling the membership. Again, on April 17, 1853, the church was more than doubled through the accession by baptism of Hans Smith, Hans Mattson (Colonel Mattson of Civil War fame), Johan Henry Asp, John Wilhelm Peterson, Carl Hakanson, Margareta Peterson and Maria Christina Johanson.

The church, now consisting of thirteen members, sought recognition by other Baptist bodies, and on Thursday morning, May 5, 1853, a council representing five American Baptist churches "convened in the meeting house of the First Baptist Church of Rock Island to consider the propriety of recognizing the Swedish Baptist Church." The names of the thirteen members were read, the history of their organ-

ization into a church was presented and inquiry was made into the articles of faith and covenant of the congregation. When the examination had been carefully made and prayerfully concluded, it was voted to recognize the church in the words of Elder E. M. Miles, clerk, "as an independent Baptist church under the name of the Swede Baptist Church of Rock Island." Anders Wiberg, at that time on a protracted visit in America, was present and preached the recognition sermon on Acts 9:11 — "Behold he prayeth."

Palmquist, the pastor of this new Baptist work, had received his appointment as missionary pastor by the American Baptist Home Mission Society in February, 1853, with a stipend of \$200 a year. In a letter to a friend in Stockholm two years later he stated that until that time he had received no financial support whatsoever. Urged by Wiberg to suggest to the members of his church that they make some effort to support their pastor, he declined to do so, due to the fact that they were all poor and many of them had suffered from illness which made it difficult for them to sustain themselves in those early years. It was not until some years later that Dr. Frank Peterson's father on behalf of the church presented the pastor with a Christmas gift of two twenty-dollar gold pieces — apparently the first effort by the church members to help the pastor bear his financial burdens.

Shortly after the recognition meeting a fourth baptismal service was held, when once again seven candidates were buried with Christ in the waters of the Mississippi, bringing the membership to twenty.

On July 4, 1853, the church completed its organization by electing two deacons, Peter Soderstrom and Anders Norelius, and two deaconesses, Mrs. Fredrika Boberg and Carolina Asp. At the same time a committee of five was

elected for the purpose of "conversing with candidates before they were brought into the church." This indicates that they believed in proper order within the church and scrupulous care in watching against unworthy men and women obtaining membership in the church.

In April, 1854, the church appointed a building committee to take steps necessary for erecting a meeting house. In the fall of the following year a lot was purchased and a small brick building with an auditorium seating seventy-five people was erected at a total expense of \$1,500. That fact may explain why the church found it possible to assume the responsibility of serving as host of the Conference which convened the following June.

THE BEGINNING IN CHICAGO

The second church to be organized in Illinois was located in Chicago. L. L. Frisk, the son of a Lutheran clergyman in Sweden, had arrived in November, 1853, after having been baptized on the profession of faith in the Strong Place Baptist Church, Brooklyn. Working in cooperation with the First American Baptist Church in Chicago and its pastor, Dr. J. C. Burroughs, he won some of his countrymen for the Lord and led them into the membership of the church. These converts were organized into a Swedish Baptist church on November 13, 1854. Previous to the organization, Chicago had been visited also by Gustaf Palmquist and F. O. Nilsson, both of whom realized the strategic importance of the young city, which at that time was still struggling to gain its stature and realize its possibilities.

For a time before the organization the Swedish Baptists met in the homes of members. Following the organization the First church at a communion service collected \$900 for

which an old German Lutheran church, located on Erie and LaSalle Streets, was purchased and placed at the disposal of the Swedish church.

Mr. Frisk did not remain very long with the newly organized church, but Gustaf Palmquist, who had spent a year as city missionary in New York and had returned to Rock Island in the autumn of 1855, took the young church in Chicago under his wing and divided his time between Rock Island, Moline (a mission of Rock Island), and Chicago. The church—which by the way is not the same as the former First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, now known as the Addison Street Baptist Church—had a membership of twenty-one at the time of the Rock Island Conference in 1856.

Thus, one hundred years ago, the number of churches in Illinois was two, and their combined membership sixty-two. However, the influence of these pioneers was greater than their comparatively small number would indicate. From influences which emanated from these embryonic groups the Gospel had gone forth into other regions as well. On the Iowa side of the Mississippi three churches, Burlington, Village Creek and New Sweden, had come into being through the efforts which had proceeded from Rock Island. For then, as ever, the Gospel could not be hemmed in locally. It had to spread if it were to retain its divine spark.

The church in Chicago, which began its history under quite favorable auspices, was disbanded in 1864 after ten years of troubled existence. The general disruption of the orderly life of the nation during the Civil War seems to have had its effect on the church.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST CONFERENCE—1856

IN THE summer of 1856 the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island was almost four years old and had grown from its original three members to forty-one. Other churches had been organized, in the meantime, at Village Creek, Iowa; Root River Valley (Houston), Minnesota; Clear Water Lake (Scandia), Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois, and New Sweden, Iowa. In Burlington, Iowa, a number of believers had been organized into a church in the early days of 1854, but their pastor and leader, F. O. Nilsson, had had his eyes on Minnesota, and before the church was many months old its members had made common cause with their spiritual leader and had decamped for Clear Water Lake, Minnesota. There they organized a new church, which later became known as the Scandia Baptist Church.

In addition there were unorganized groups in Chisago Lake and St. Paul, Minnesota, and in New York City. In both of the latter cities no organized churches were to be formed for another decade or more. Altogether the combined number of members in these various churches and unorganized groups amounted to 179.

The widening boundaries of the Swedish Baptist people posed certain serious problems. They were isolated from each other, because of distance, and were cut off from association with their English speaking brethren because of language barriers. That situation made their leaders fear for

their spiritual welfare and for their unity in faith, and they began to cast about for ways and means to unite them into a closer fellowship. The answer was given in the conventions and associational meetings of the American Baptists. A conference of the Swedish-American Baptists would bring them together, would aid them in solving their spiritual and organizational problems.

While our records do not specifically say so, we may be fairly certain that Gustaf Palmquist was the leading spirit in promoting the conference idea. Being the only educated man among them, after Anders Wiberg had returned to Sweden in 1855, he was the one who would be likely to see the need for closer fellowship and to profit by the example of his Anglo-American brethren. Further, the hand of the schoolmaster is clearly detected in the scope and plan of the conference program.

In the early summer of 1856 the call went out to the groups of fellow-believers, wherever they were found, to unite in cooperative fellowship. The response came from those who could avail themselves of the opportunity for conference and fellowship thus offered. To those living along the great waterway of the central West, the Mississippi river steamers offered a means of travel. That this means was not very comfortable is indicated by the following description, given by Dr. Frank Peterson at the Diamond Jubilee in Chicago, 1927. Dr. Peterson had had occasion to come in contact with the pilgrims from Iowa and Minnesota. He pictured the journey by the river steamer thus:

TRAVELING TO THE CONFERENCE

“The Mississippi river was then the only artery of travel in the Central West. The cabins of the steamboats were

fairly good, but no delegate to our conference ever thought of such luxury as a cabin passage. He was content with the crude accommodations of the lower deck. On this deck there was not even a stool to sit on, much less a place to sleep. Such comfort had to be snatched wherever a place could be found on the cinder-covered floor, or perchance, on top of the piles of freight. In that case, one was likely to be disturbed by the deck-hands at every landing. The delegate furnished his own lunch as the only food furnished the deck passengers were the odors from the kitchen.

"The delegates arrived at their destination a sorry looking lot. Not even as much as a wash basin, or soap, was furnished the deck passenger to aid in making his toilet. The journey overland was usually made by foot, or oxcart. The luxury of horses was not known until some years later.

"It would be interesting to note the changes that have taken place in the different decades. If a pageant of the delegates of the different decades were to pass the door just now, I would lose my audience, for you would rush out to see the procession.

"At the head of the line come the delegates of the first decade. They come afoot with bundles over their shoulders. They are dressed in homespun and home-made clothes. A Chicago tailor would not know how to make such suits today.

"Here are the delegates of the second decade. They ride in lumber wagons drawn by oxen. Boards are laid across the wagon box for seats. At a sudden jolt the boards are liable to slip, causing the occupants to drop in a heap at the bottom of the box. Then there is heard a commingling of screams and laughter. However, it all helps to enliven the journey.

"The delegates of the third decade also ride in lumber wagons, but they are drawn by horses and the travelers sit

in spring seats — quite aristocratic they are and they give expression to their happiness in singing Christian songs along the way.

"In the fourth decade there is quite a change. The delegates come by trains, usually the second class, as this class was used in those days.

"Here come the Jubilee delegates. What a company they are! They come in two divisions. Hundreds have come in Pullmans from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts, and from many intermediate points. How spick and span they look! They have all been brushed and groomed by the porter. They look well contented, too. They have had their breakfast in the Pullman diner and they come from the station to the church in taxis.

"Delegates of the second division have come in their own comfortable autos. There must be a thousand of them for the procession seems to be a mile long. They are a little worried about where in this big city they are going to park their cars. However, others have had their worries as well as they.

" 'When Noah sailed the ocean blue
He had his worries same as you;
For days and days he drove the ark
Before he found a place to park.' "

There were, however, those who were not under the necessity of traveling by the Mississippi wood burner. In 1854 a railroad had been opened from Chicago to Rock Island. While the railroad cars of the fifties could not be compared with the comfortable conveyances of our own day, the idea of completing the trip between Chicago and the Mississippi terminal in one day seemed a boon indeed to those who half a dozen years earlier had been compelled to spend a week traveling that distance of 180 miles.

*THE FIRST SWEDISH BAPTIST
CONFERENCE ANYWHERE*

The dates of the Conference, June 20-25, 1856, are important, for these days mark the very first conference of Swedish Baptists anywhere. Not till a year later did their fellow-believers in Sweden meet for their first national gathering.

When the conference convened, Gustaf Palmquist was made moderator and Andrew Norelius recording secretary. Palmquist opened the first session of this historic meeting by reading Psalm 18 and offering prayer. The representatives of the churches were seven: F. O. Nilsson, then residing at Clear Water Lake (Scandia), had an inspiring story to tell of the budding work in Minnesota, of which he was the sole representative present; Carl Hokanson and P. Nordell were delegates of the local church; A. G. Swedberg had come from Village Creek, Iowa; C. Carlson and A. Norelius were representatives from New Sweden, Iowa; Palmquist represented the church in Chicago to which he was then giving part of his time. Others attending the various sessions of the conference were members of the local church residing in Rock Island and Moline, to whom the conference offered an unsought and welcome opportunity to feast on the good things offered.

The conference program was not unduly burdened with reports or plans for future activities. In fact, the routine business was at a minimum. It was really an occasion for instruction and edification. The program reveals the genius of Palmquist with its numerous subjects dealing with theological and practical matters that laymen and lay preachers might puzzle over and find hard to resolve. Here are

samples of the thirty-two questions discussed from Friday to Wednesday:

What is the real ground for salvation?

Is salvation completed or is it to be completed in the future?

What is meant by a carnal nature and what is the end of the carnally minded?

Who is a right church member and what are his duties to God, his fellow-members and himself?

Should a member be allowed to remain in the church when it is evident that he is no longer a believer, even though he is causing no trouble?

What is the obligation of the church toward Christian missions?

What should be the fundamental object of a minister's work?

What are a minister's greatest temptations?

What attitude should a minister take in matters of controversy between believers and unbelievers?

Should we preach all the truth even though believers may become antagonized?

Should the preacher make house to house visitations?

What should be his attitude toward other denominations?

The discussions of these questions became brisk and were followed with deep interest by non-participants. The questions were answered in the light of the Word, and it is safe to say that those attending returned enriched in spirit as a result of the free exchange of opinion that prevailed and the exposition of the Scriptures which threw light on the questions that may have puzzled the men who had been called from their lay duties to serve as leaders of the churches. It is reported that the discussions became particularly brisk after the intrepid F. O. Nilsson had arrived

from Minnesota on the fourth day of the conference; for Nilsson was always ready to enter into arguments on matters relating to the church or the Word of God.

The conference, however, did not confine itself to questions of an abstruse nature. Reports from the various churches and groups of unorganized believers constituted an important element of the meetings. Further, a decision was made to organize a conference of Swedish Baptists with annual meetings to be held at such times and places as might be determined from time to time. The seven churches constituting the first conference, had a total membership of 161. Rock Island had 41 members, Chicago 21, Village Creek 41, New Sweden 15, Houston 11, Scandia 25 and Chisago Lake 7.

Another matter that might shock some modern Baptists, who are inclined to shy away from having their beliefs recorded, was the adoption of a confession of faith, translated from the English by Anders Wiberg. The Conference of 1856 went on record as believing in the fundamentals of faith recorded in that confession, which, though not binding on either individuals or churches, still tended to make clear where our fathers stood on doctrinal matters.

The conference also took the initiative in the ordination of two brethren who at that time were engaged in the Gospel ministry. The candidates were A. G. Swedberg of Village Creek and N. J. Rundquist of Rock Island. A committee was appointed, consisting of Palmquist, F. O. Nilsson, P. Nordell and Carl Hokanson from Rock Island and C. Carlson and A. Norelius from New Sweden, Iowa. After a careful examination of the candidates the committee recommended to the church to ordain the two brethren. The sacred act took place the following day.

The conference was marked by an orderly spirit and an

earnest desire to make use of all means for promoting the growth and quality of the churches. The delegates were determined to know the will of God and to act on their knowledge.

The conference was known during the following years as simply the Swedish Baptist Conference or, popularly, as "The Conference."

It is from this conference that the Baptist Conference of Illinois counts its origin. The question has been raised whether that claim is justified. We think it is. True, for a number of years the Conference was general in nature and churches in other states, notably Minnesota and Iowa, participated in it. In the course of time changes took place, as will be noted hereafter, and the Conference became known under different names. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the first conference meeting as well as several subsequent gatherings were held in the state of Illinois and that, as other state groups were organized, Illinois was finally left to carry on the traditions and labors of the original conference. Thus the churches of Illinois have had an unbroken conference record. Started in 1856, the Baptist Conference of Illinois still carries on in the spirit of the fathers of a hundred years ago.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY CONFERENCES

1857—The second conference, that of 1857, was held in Village Creek, Iowa, June 18-20. The officers were the same as in 1856. The number of churches represented was eight with a combined membership of 232. Of these, two were Illinois churches, Rock Island with 44 and Chicago with 24 members.

The thing that marks this conference is Gustaf Palmquist's resignation as moderator. He was about to leave for Sweden whither he had been urged to come and for which he was all the more inclined since his health was poor. A heavy cold, contracted during a snowstorm when he was walking from Moline to Rock Island, had impaired his physical condition. F. O. Nilsson made a farewell address to Palmquist. In retrospect we can say that nothing that had happened or was about to happen during the first decade of the Swedish Baptist work in America affected this work as much as Palmquist's departure, for he was the peerless leader and there was no Elisha standing ready to take up Elijah's fallen mantle.

1858—The conference of 1858 was held in New Sweden, Iowa. The attendance was small. No delegate represented Chicago, and Minnesota had withdrawn to form a conference of its own. The lack of strong leadership made itself felt at that time.

1859 — The fourth conference was back in Rock Island, with N. J. Rundquist as its moderator and P. Nordell as secretary. A new church of 26 members had been formed in Galesburg and most of the churches reported increase in membership.

1860 — This conference, too, seems to have been held in Rock Island, but the minutes are missing and nothing is known of what transpired there.

1861 — For this year there is no indication of any conference, no doubt because of unsettled conditions incident to the Civil War.

1862 — In 1862, however, the conference idea was revived and the meeting place was again Rock Island. For the first time the minutes connote the limitation of the conference area. Formerly it had consistently been named "The Swedish Baptist Conference." Now it is named "The Conference of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Illinois and Iowa." Thus the fact that the Minnesota churches had dropped out of the Conference and organized a fellowship of their own was tacitly admitted.

1863 — This conference was held in Village Creek. N. J. Rundquist was the moderator and Nils Olson the secretary. A motion was passed at that time urging the Minnesota churches to return in order that a more aggressive work might be carried on by the Conference.

1864 — The conference of 1864, also held in Village Creek, was notable for several reasons. In the first place, it marked the end of a decided slump which had followed the return to Sweden of the early leaders, F. O. Nilsson and Gustaf Palmquist. The early church in Chicago had been disbanded.

In the moderator's chair that year was a man, who more than any others had taken a leading part in the development

of the Baptist work both in America and Sweden. This man was Anders Wiberg who had returned to America for his second visit and had arranged to be present at the Illinois-Iowa conference, where he was promptly made the moderator and where his leadership made itself felt. From his hand the Conference received a draft of a constitution which was adopted. The proceedings were edited in a masterly way and caused to be printed. These published records constitute, in reality, the first annual, or year book, of the Swedish Baptists of America.

It seems that the conferences preceding the 1864 gathering in Village Creek had been held chiefly for the purpose of edification and Bible study. On this occasion, however, the delegates organized themselves formally into a conference for Illinois and Iowa and adopted a constitution. Paragraph eight of the minutes reads as follows:

"A motion was passed to organize a general conference of all the Swedish Baptists in the northwestern part of America. However, as local difficulties made this impractical, it was decided to organize a conference for Illinois and Iowa."

1868 — The first conference which resulted in a direct forward movement was that of 1868. It was held in Altona, and the highest point in its activities was the election of Olof Lindh, recently arrived from Sweden, to become the Conference missionary at a salary of \$600 a year. The story of his experiences is told in his autobiography *Minnen* (Memoirs), where he relates the difficult conditions under which the missionary's work was carried on in the pioneer days.

1869 — This year the conference was held for the first time in Chicago. The missionary asked for a raise in his salary to offset in some degree the costly traveling expenses,

which were borne by himself, but the conference could not see its way to grant his request and Lindh's resignation followed. N. E. Axling, who had come to America in 1866, was elected as his successor. At that time there were seven churches in Illinois and Iowa with a combined membership of some 500, but new settlements were springing up here and there offering unlimited opportunities for pioneer work to induce the new missionary to do his best.

1871 — The conference of 1871, which was held in Rock Island-Moline, was notable in that Captain John Alexis Edgren, pioneer educator and writer, was present. He was the new pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago and was to remain within the Conference for many years, serving as an inspiring leader of the growing work. Edgren was elected moderator of the conference. The reporter for the conference gave the following glowing account of the generous hospitality of the entertaining church:

"In vain do we try to tell of the sacrificial love and pleasant reception the kind church of Rock Island-Moline gave us; for it was far above our highest expectations. Only one thing seemed to worry these friends, namely how they might secure an adequate number of home guests and how they would find opportunity to entertain us in the most royal manner."

In the fall of this year John Alexis Edgren founded the Seminary in Chicago.

1872 — When the delegates met in Village Creek a further sloughing off took place in the conference. The churches of western Iowa and Nebraska at that time announced their desire to organize a conference of their own. This was done with the blessing of the mother conference. Thus the original Conference had been partitioned into three district bodies, leaving the churches in Illinois and eastern Iowa



One of the early baptisms in the Mississippi river. The artist, Reynold Lund, pictures Gustaf Palmquist in the act of baptizing Frank Peterson's father. Frank is the boy standing on the shore.

FOUNDERS



Gustaf Palmquist



Anders Wiberg



F. O. Nilsson



N. J. Rundquist

BUILDERS



J. A. Edgren



Eric Wingren



Frank Peterson



Olof Lindh



John Ongman



G. A. Hagstrom



C. G. Lagergren



Eric Sandell



Olof Hedeen

MISSIONARIES



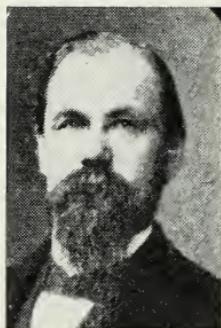
N. E. Axling



N. E. Nelson



A. W. Backlund



P. G. Holmberg



A. P. Hanson



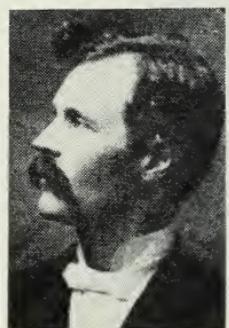
E. J. Nordlander



R. A. Arlander



John A. Westin



Charles Palm

AND COLPORTEURS



A. J. Freeman and daughter Esther



The Palmquist Memorial Bible Wagon

Left to right: Charles Palm, Esther Freeman, A. J. Freeman and Fred Wahlberg

MISSIONARIES



C. O. Dahlen



John Hedeen



C. E. Wedholm



Reynold Lund



A. Liliemark



John Ward



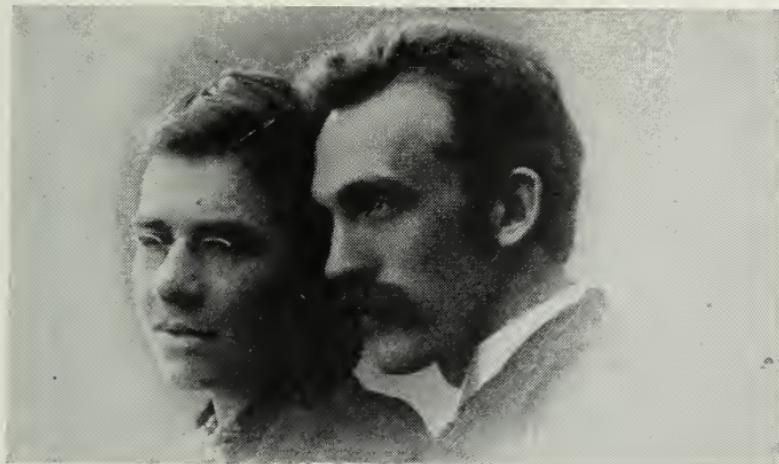
Axel Rendahl



G. E. Wallendorf



Victor Sherling



Missionaries Emily and Oscar Swanson, Assam, India

INFLUENTIAL LAYMEN



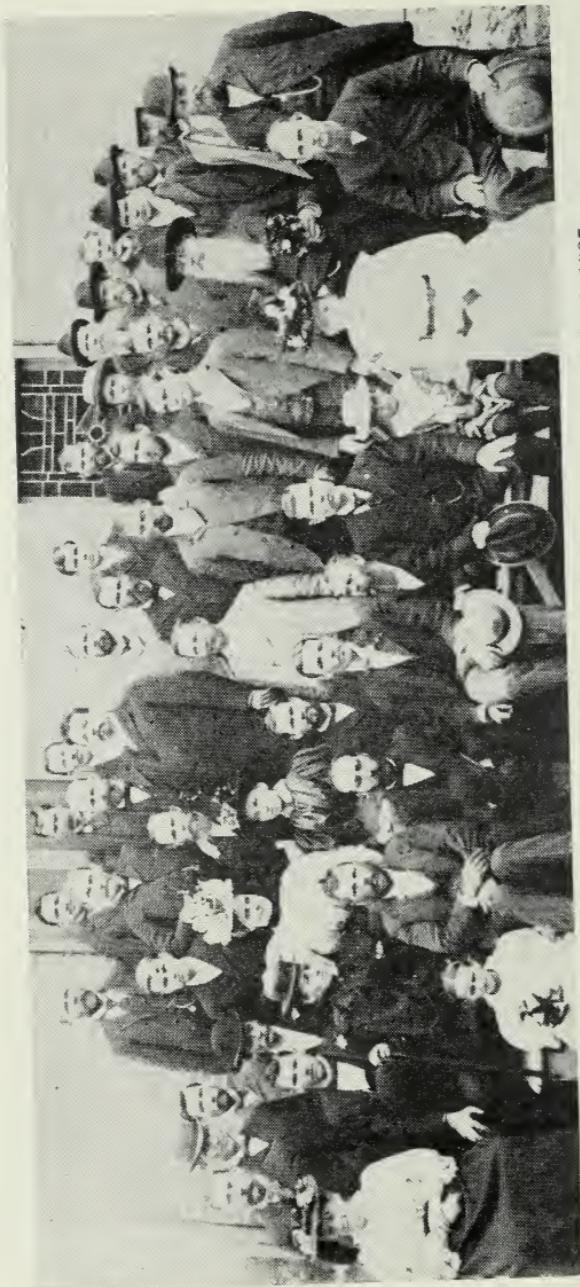
John Swanson

M. A. Rosenlund

Carl Mehlin

Oscar E. Ostling





Illinois Conference pastors and delegates meeting in Rockford 1897

to carry on by themselves. An interesting news item regarding these three conferences occurs in *Evangelisten* in the late summer of 1874:

"The Swedish Baptists of America have during the past summer held three conferences, where momentous questions have been discussed, such as the fanatical teachings of Seventh Day Adventism relative to a return to the Jewish Sabbath, concerning eternal punishment and annihilation of the wicked, etc."

1883 — In June of this year there was a further re-organization. The Iowa churches decided to separate themselves from the Illinois-Eastern Iowa Conference and organize their own conference. The organizational meeting was held in Des Moines. The Nebraska Conference was also organized about the same time at a meeting in Oakland. The Illinois Conference, meeting in Village Creek, revised its constitution and began to function as a separate state conference.

When Was the Illinois Conference Organized? Professor Adolf Olson, in his "A Centenary History," recalls that this question gave rise to an animated debate in the denominational press during the summer of 1898. Professor C. G. Lagergren claimed: "The conference organized in 1856 is the oldest one in America, and is today the Illinois Conference. Furthermore, since the Illinois Conference is a state conference, it is thus our oldest state conference." To prove that proposition he pointed out that the original organization of 1856 persisted throughout the years, so that when the Minnesota churches separated themselves and likewise later the Iowa churches, only the Illinois churches remained in the original conference.

On the other side of the question Eric Wingren, editor of *Nya Vecko-Posten*, Olof Lindh and others argued to

the effect that "if the Illinois Conference is forty-two years old (1898), then also the Minnesota and the Iowa conferences are just as old, for all three have grown out of the conference of 1856." Professor Olson takes the view that "the origin of an independent Illinois state conference cannot be traced farther back than 1883." Howbeit, the Illinois Conference has retained June, 1856, the original date as its founding.

CHAPTER FOUR

SLOW PROGRESS

The First Quarter-Century 1856-1881

THE growth during the first decades was comparatively small. Only three churches were organized in the seventies. The big immigration from Sweden had not yet begun, and the few Swedes, who had come, were poor and strangers in this great land. They were strangers to all and to everything they met in this new world. The language was in no small degree baffling to the newcomers. They found it even difficult at times to understand their own countrymen, who had preceded them to America by a few months. In their eagerness to learn the new language they used English words with Swedish endings to the puzzlement of both yankees and "greenhorns." The expression, "Putta kaffepannan på stoven" (Put the coffee pot on the stove) is an illustration of this lingo.

When the writer of this book was a newcomer, he attended one evening a party of Swedes who had been in America long enough to mix the languages. On the way home he confided to a friend: "I don't believe it will take me long to learn English. I understood most of the conversation this evening." The friend replied: "You certainly should understand, for everybody was speaking Swedish."

Usually the Swedish immigrant acquired a working knowledge of the English language quite rapidly, even if he found it difficult to twist his tongue to such new sounds as

"j," "w," and "th." The process of Americanization, both as to language and citizenship, was speedy and thorough.

To many of the succeeding generations the Swedish language became a problem in reverse. One of our former Illinois pastors used to tell about his little boy, who woke up one night crying as if he had been terribly frightened. His mother hurried to his side to inquire about the reason for this sudden outburst. To her question the boy replied: "I had a dream." "What did you dream?" was the mother's next query. "I don't know," came the startling reply, "it was in Swedish."

One of the reasons why the immigrants came to our shores was that of improving their economic conditions. But it took time to become established and in the meantime they were compelled to eke out their existence as frugally as possible. The wages were only fifty to seventy-five cents a day and the man who could earn one dollar a day was an outstanding individual.

The immigrants from Sweden were Lutheran by virtue of the fact that the Lutheran church was a part of the state. Every person born in Sweden was automatically a member of the state church. The Baptist movement was comparatively new in Sweden, counting its beginning from 1848, and the Baptist group was looked upon as a divisive sect that was foreign to Swedish church life and ought to be extirpated. It took time before the new settlers could overcome their prejudices and accept the American way of life which grants freedom and equality to all peoples and beliefs.

EARLY CHURCH DISCIPLINE

At the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary, in 1881, there were eleven churches in the Conference, which in-

cluded churches in eastern Iowa and also the church in Sister Bay, Wisconsin. Judging from the minutes of the business meetings of the churches one can but wonder to what extent the severe discipline retarded the growth in the membership. It was regarded as a sign of earnest zeal for the truth to speak right out in the business meeting and to strike straight from the shoulder when it concerned cases of discipline. Whereas in our days discipline is something almost unheard of in churches, exclusions in the pioneer days were nearly as common an item on the agenda as the reception of members. Even the pastors were not immune to discipline, which the following cases indicate.

When a pastor in the Rock Island church resigned and his resignation was accepted, he requested his letter to an American Baptist church. His request was denied until he had paid up his debts in the city. At a later meeting he was excluded from the church.

Accusations had been made against another pastor that his preaching was not to the edification of the saints. After the church had inquired into the matter and had found the accusations groundless, it was voted to exclude the two men who had circulated the reports. The following year a council was called to settle some differences between certain members. By recommendation of the council the church voted to exclude the pastor from the church.

Back in 1872 two of the members of the Rock Island church were excluded because they had joined the Freemasons.

While on the subject of church business meetings it may be of interest to know how a pastor was called, when the choice was between two candidates. Following the practice in the early apostolic days, the church prayed and cast lots, accepting as God's choice the man who was thus chosen.

A chapter could be written on the meeting places in those early days, but suffice it to say that the first gatherings were held in some member's home until the church was able to venture a building program. The church edifice in Rock Island was built in 1855. According to a statement in *History of Rock Island County*, 1878, the church was built in September, 1855, at a price of \$1,500. A brick building with a seating capacity of seventy-five, it was ready for use the third Sunday of December.

HOW EARLY SERVICES WERE CONDUCTED

Dr. Frank Peterson, who at the age of four came with his parents from Sweden to Rock Island the same year as the First Swedish church was organized (1852), had a vivid memory of what took place in the new church. He writes:

"There need be no great stretch of imagination to understand the keen interest that centered upon that Sunday morning in 1855, when their first house of prayer was dedicated to God. All had some part in the preparation for this notable event. . . . All must attend, dressed in their very best, for was not this their first church edifice and was not this the dedication by the Swedish Baptists in America? It was truly an historic event. Many a costly edifice and pretentious cathedral has been dedicated with greater pomp and pageantry, both before and after, but I doubt if any have given the worshipers more real happiness and genuine joy than did this little Sabbath home to the members of this pioneer church. The entering within the gates of this temple gave the members a home-like feeling. It was their very own. Their blood and bone and muscle had become a part of every board and rafter and shingle. Possession gave it sanctity and charm.

"Christmas came along and dear memories of the fatherland must be recalled. To this end old customs must be followed. For the *julotta* the church must be suitably decorated. The decoration consisted chiefly of extra candles placed on the pulpit and in the windows, which when lit, cast their flickering light within the room as the people assembled. At five o'clock in the morning they roused the roosters and awakened the neighbors by singing *Var hälsad, sköna morgonstund* (All hail to thee, o blessed morn). They had no organ to lead, but what difference did it make if they did not or whether they kept in tune, just so they all could join in making a joyful noise unto the Lord? Truly such revival of sacred home memories made life in the new world worth living, even though separated by thousands of miles from dear relatives and friends in the fatherland."

This heart-stirring experience was typical of every community where the pioneers organized churches and erected meetinghouses for worship and spiritual nurture.

In later years Dr. J. E. Klingberg gave a touching description of what the churches were like some fifty years ago:

"Though our churches were not known for their architectural beauty, they were nevertheless quite inviting. Some of them were even grand. I remember yet to my great surprise when I as a youth for the first time saw the First Church on Elm street, Chicago. What a remarkable church edifice, I thought. But no wonder. I was a member of Salem, whose church resembled the catacombs of Rome, some kind of a cave or underground passage way. But just as the Christians were happy in the catacombs, so we rejoiced below the sidewalk of the South Lincoln Street. Our spiritual happiness did not depend on a beautiful building. Pipe organs were almost unknown in our churches in those

days. But we had a parlor organ, and, fortunately, the guitar, that innocent stringed instrument, had not lost its popularity. Pianos were considered articles of luxury and in some quarters were looked upon as ungodly inventions. We had no automobiles, but we had good horses and strong legs and therefore no lack of means of transportation."

What were the services like in the pioneer churches? To answer this question we will have to call again an eye-witness in the person of Dr. Frank Peterson, who has left us the following vivid account of pioneer services:

"In the first twenty years the churches had increased to thirty-five (throughout the middle west), but there were only eight pastors to care for these. It is clear, therefore, that in many churches the meetings had to be conducted by laymen. Their qualifications for this important task were, of course, very meager. Hard working men as they were, they had neither the time nor the ability to prepare any logically arranged discourses. They would give a rather disconnected talk or exhortation or, instead of that, read one of Spurgeon's sermons.

"The latter could be best, of course, and that for two reasons. First, there would be something worth hearing; and second, there would be an end to the meeting. Usually, however, there was a serious drawback to this. The reader, not well up in this art, would go on in a sing-song tone, recklessly disregardful of pauses or proper emphasis. The monotonous grind was very apt to put the hearers to sleep.

"At prayer meetings it was sometimes customary to remain kneeling while one after another, as the spirit moved them, led in prayer. This would be kept up so long that the knees would ache, and the worshiper would change from one position to another, until at last he could think of noth-

ing else but his aching knees and feel unpleasantly impatient of the long-winded petitioners.

"I recall that upon one occasion, when F. O. Nilsson came to Village Creek, he had walked ten miles from town to where the meeting was held and was very tired. At the meeting one of those long seasons of prayer was begun. Nilsson lay until his knees ached so that he could stand it no longer. He arose and said: 'Brethren, let us intersperse our prayers with song and testimony. This long posture on aching knees takes the spirit of worship out of us. It reminds me of the torture that those doing penance impose upon themselves.' A restless youngster that I was, I thought that rebuke, administered by Mr. Nilsson, was the most sensible thing of the meeting.

"At revivals things were different. No flippancy was allowed there to cheapen the character of the meeting. The preacher made us feel that the most important and serious question of our lives was up for consideration."

OPPOSITIONS

Let no one think that the pioneer Baptists were unhampered in their propagation of their beliefs. On the contrary, they were strongly opposed by other denominational groups. That the Swedish Lutherans should work against them is understandable. The mass of Swedish immigrants were practically all nominal Lutherans, having been members of the Lutheran state church of Sweden. It was natural, therefore, when Swedish Lutherans began to organize churches in America that they should consider all Swedes their parish and their own church the authorized Swedish church of America. Other denominations were only "sects."

The controversies with the Lutherans and also the Meth-

odists centered around the mode and meaning of baptism, which caused much bitter feelings and even public debates. The most dangerous threat, however, to Baptist unity did not come from the Lutherans but from the Seventh Day Adventists. Because the Adventists adhere to baptism by immersion, the Baptists seemed to be a fruitful field for their proselytizing. That the Baptist people were intimately affected appears by numerous references in denominational periodicals and conference annuals. The keeping of the seventh day as Sabbath was, according to the Adventists, the only assurance of obtaining eternal life, but other fundamental teachings of the Bible were also at stake.

The pioneers, however, were men and women of strong faith in the Word of God. The all-important question was, "What does the Bible say about it?" The average church member had a good knowledge of the Bible. It was practically the only book he read and much of its content he could repeat from memory. Our fathers believed in the new birth. "Are you born again?" "Are you a child of God?" These were questions that must be answered in seeking church membership. As to the Christian way of life, the grace of God had taught them to forsake ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. Little wonder that revival fires were burning in the churches and that the Baptists became known as a God-fearing and missionary people.

CHAPTER FIVE

DECades OF ADVANCE

Second Quarter-Century 1881-1906

WITH the beginning of 1880 a new day dawned for the struggling small churches in the Illinois Conference. Only seven churches had been organized in the state during the first quarter-century, and one of them, the first church in Chicago, had disbanded. But during the decade of the eighties no less than seventeen churches came into being and ten in the nineties. The good work continued during another decade, when seven new churches sprung up and several institutions were formed. After 1910 followed a long period, of which it could be said that the Conference was "barely holding its own."

One of the main factors in the unusual growth over a period of thirty years was the tremendous wave of immigration that swept over the country from 1880 until the first world war. The primary cause was, without question, a gracious visitation of God upon the praying churches, resulting in revivals and in sacrificial efforts to see God's work prosper. Since the work was carried on in the Swedish language, the progress was much dependent on the number of people who could be reached by that means.

IMMIGRATION

The stream of Swedish immigration to America began in the early forties and reached its flood-tide in the early

eighties. In the census of the year 1850 there were in Illinois 1,123 Swedish-born, in 1860 6,470, in 1870 29,979, in 1880 42,415, in 1890 86,514, in 1900 109,147, and in 1910 115,424. By that time the Swedish-born and the second generation numbered altogether about 235,000 within the borders of Illinois. The corresponding figure for the entire nation was approximately 605,000.

The Swedish immigrants seldom came singly but rather in parties of from twenty to fifty or more. They came, perhaps, from the same small village or county in Sweden and as a rule settled in one place in this country. It is quite interesting to note that the first Swedish preachers coming to America, came as members or leaders of big parties. One such famous venture was the Bishop Hill colony in Illinois, which was established in 1846. The same year the Swedish Methodists organized their first church at Victoria, Illinois. The Lutherans started at Andover, Illinois, in 1850, and the Baptists laid the foundation for their work at Rock Island, Illinois, in 1852. Whatever else inspired the Swedes to leave their homeland for these shores, the "American letters" had perhaps the greatest influence. Sweden was poor and the opportunities were limited. The wealth and the best part of the land were concentrated in the hands of the privileged few. A large portion of the population was compelled to live a life of poverty.

"We can't be worse off than we are here," was the refrain from many parties. "Herring, potatoes, and small beer are our daily ration. Meat and milk are rare luxuries. Despite extreme economy, we grow poorer every day. The almshouse will be our last resort if we stay here, but our relatives in America, who once were as poor as we, are well to do. They are honest and we have confidence in what they tell us."

"The emigrant visualized America as a land where the dignity of the human soul was recognized, where work was honorable, where class distinctions were leveled, and where the future beckoned to a status of economic independence."

One of the churches that experienced a rapid growth during this immigration period was the Salem Baptist Church, then located in Englewood and known by that name. It is interesting to note that this church, which was organized in 1885 by eighteen members, twenty-five years later had a membership of 535 souls. By far the greater number of additions came by letter rather than by baptism. In the twenty-five year period the church received 382 by baptism and 652 by letter. Not all those who were received by letters came from Sweden, but it is safe to say that a large portion of them were immigrants. The attraction to a large city and the shifting population within Chicago account for some of the additions to the Salem church.

Another creative factor in the growth of the Illinois churches was the theological seminary located in Chicago and later in Morgan Park, on Chicago's south-west side. From the beginning in 1871, when John Alexis Edgren founded his seminary, the students were actively engaged in the preaching of the Gospel in new fields and had a vital share, for some forty years, in the formation of practically every church in Illinois, and more particularly in the metropolitan areas of Chicago.

INSPIRING FACTORS

The churches also received a great boost when the Illinois Sunday School Union was organized October 21, 1892. G. Arvid Hagstrom, at that time only twenty-five years of age, became the Union's first missionary. We take

the liberty of quoting from Adolf Olson's *A Centenary History* concerning this particular work and its influence on the churches:

"With a native talent for creative leadership and organization, a great capacity for productive work, and with a contagious interest in children, G. Arvid Hagstrom succeeded in stimulating churches and Sunday schools to launch out into the deep in their work for children. Child evangelism, which sixty years ago was not much encouraged in the churches, received special attention, and the missionary rejoiced in seeing many boys and girls turn to Christ as their personal Savior.

"Training institutes for Sunday school teachers, at that time practically a new thing, too, were held, eight of them during the first year of Hagstrom's service. Moreover, as a result of his influence and that of others in the Illinois Sunday School Union, the American Baptist Publication Society was induced to start publishing a Sunday school paper in Swedish, *Barnens Tidning* (Children's News), as well as hymnals and other literature specifically for Swedish Baptist Sunday schools."

Following Hagstrom's resignation as Sunday school missionary after three years of effective service, others continued to build upon the good foundation, but more about that in another chapter.

Included in Hagstrom's work during those rich years was his leading participation in the forming of an Illinois Baptist Young People's Union October 2, 1893, which became the parent organization of all united Conference youth work. Before relinquishing his position as Sunday school missionary he also served for some time as co-editor of a young people's publication, *The Sunday School and Home*.

Another active organization was a state-wide ministers' union, which came into existence June 4, 1889. This union afforded the ministers many opportunities of fellowship and Bible conferences when vital subjects, relating to doctrine, church polity and methods of work, were discussed.

A tremendous impetus to the churches was the foreign missionary work as represented by Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Swanson, who went from Illinois in 1893 to their mission field in Assam, India, under the appointment of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. The Illinois churches considered them in a special sense their very own missionaries. Of special interest at the annual meeting was the reading of a letter from the Swansons. Their message was always printed in toto in the Annual as a part of the reports. Theirs was an unusually rich and blessed ministry, and its blessings flowed over into the churches everywhere.

THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

The fiftieth anniversary of the Conference was observed in Moline May 24-27, 1906. The host pastor was D. Lofstrom. This conference had been looked forward to with much anticipation. A historical committee had been appointed several years prior to the jubilee to gather material for a history. In 1902 Dr. Lagergren, who was the chairman of the committee, reported that he was writing the history and that it was to be published either separately or in connection with the Conference Annual. Due to lack of interest on the part of the churches to support this enterprise financially, the history was never published. In 1909 the Conference urged the committee to complete the history, and in 1914 Dr. Lagergren again reported that he had the manuscript

ready and offered it to the Conference for publication. Apparently no action was taken by the Conference.

Twenty-four of the thirty-two churches, comprising a membership of 4,215, were represented at the golden anniversary. J. A. Carlson was elected moderator and John A. Swanson recording secretary. Two new missionaries were appointed, C. O. Dahlen and John Hedeen. The latter's service was destined to extend over a period of thirty-six years, the longest of any missionary in our denomination. Dr. Eric Wingren, editor and publisher of *Nya Vecko-Posten* (New Weekly Mail), preached the jubilee sermon. The historical address was delivered by C. G. Lagergren. The platform was adorned with giant portraits of the pioneer ministers F. O. Nilsson, Gustaf Palmquist and Anders Wiberg. All those who had been members thirty years or more were especially recognized. Thirty responded to the roll call, among them Dr. Frank Peterson. The half-century jubilee closed Sunday evening with the observance of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

Third Quarter-Century 1906 - 1931

FIFTY years ago the Illinois Conference launched out on somewhat troubled waters. In those years the modern Pentecostal movement had started in Los Angeles and was spreading with extraordinary rapidity throughout the whole country. Having close affinity in doctrine to the Baptist faith, it was only natural that this "new movement," as it was called among our people, would seriously affect many of the churches.

At least three of the Chicago churches were rocked by this movement. Pastor J. W. Hjertstrom of the Grace church had had an experience of the so called "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and threw himself with all the force of a strong personality into this movement. In the Lake View church pastor P. Swartz became involved in this type of Pentecostalism, and in the Fairfield Avenue church pastor Martin Carlson and some of his successors fell in line with it and went to such excesses, typical of the movement, that it became exceedingly difficult for the church to weather the storm.

For about five years, 1905-1910, much was written in our denominational press to clarify the important teachings concerning the Spirit-filled life. "Admitting the fact of a 'second blessing,' 'baptism in the Spirit,' or whatever other name it was given, as a glorious experience in the life of a Christian, the more sane Bible students pointed out that no

experience, of whatever kind, must be allowed to obscure the great event of the new birth, the very starting point of the Christian life, when the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, moved in and took possession of the believer's heart. Nor must the clear New Testament teachings concerning repeated fillings of the Holy Spirit and sanctification as a growth and life-long process be minimized." (Quotation from *A Centenary History*.)

NEW ACTIVITIES

The Golden Jubilee of the General Conference, which was observed in Chicago 1902, set in motion ideas for numerous new enterprises. Within ten years the following institutions were founded: The Children's Home, New Britain, Connecticut (1903); the Home of Rest, Fridhem, Chicago (1905); Bethel Academy, St. Paul, Minnesota (1905); Adelphia College, Seattle, Washington (1905); Bethany Beach, Sawyer, Michigan (1905); Mounds Park Sanitarium, St. Paul, Minnesota (1906); Elim Park Home of Rest, Shelton, Connecticut (1907); Sunset Home, Concordia, Kansas (1907); Baptist Conference Press, Chicago (1909); first issue of *The Standard* (1911); the theological seminary, which had been affiliated with the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, became independent in 1912.

That somebody should think of suggesting to the Illinois Conference the establishing of a hospital seems altogether logical. Such a proposal was presented to the conference of 1909 by Dr. Axel Werelius, but after one year's deliberation it was voted down for financial reasons.

The conference of 1910 was greatly disturbed when it learned that its trusted treasurer had embezzled \$1,352.12, which amount was never recovered.

At the conference 1913 it was decided to merge the Young People's Union and the Sunday School Union with the Conference. The constitution was changed accordingly.

In 1916 the first suggestion of an independent foreign mission was made. The proposal came to the Conference from the ministers, following an address by Prof. Olof Hedeen on the subject, "Should we as Swedish Baptists in America consider a separate foreign mission?" Up to this time and until 1944 foreign mission contributions were channeled through the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

NEW ADJUSTMENTS

The language question was discussed for the first time on the conference floor in 1917. That was during the first world war, when the sentiment in the nation was strong against foreign languages and anything not purely American. Several pastors claimed that they had tried to conduct English services but had found very little interest for them, even when American preachers had been engaged. The war, however, gave the Swedish language the death blow, although it took nearly a quarter-century before it expired as a preaching medium.

It was reported to the conference 1918 that the church in Rock Island had voted to merge with the Moline church and to turn all the valuable documents over to that church. In return the Moline church had promised to support a mission in Rock Island. Later reports, however, indicate that the actual disbanding of the Rock Island church did not take place until 1930, when the small remaining group decided to unite with the local American Baptist church. The property also fell into the hands of this same corporation, much to the regret of the Conference.

From the very beginning, the Conference received financial aid for its missionary work from the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Baptist Publication Society. The former contributed annually several hundred dollars to needy churches, and the ABPS gave half of the salary to the colporter John Hedeen and \$900 to missionary John Ward. This interest on the part of the American societies was greatly appreciated.

In 1921 the Conference received notice from the American Baptist Home Mission Society that the contributions, which during the years had dwindled to \$380, would be discontinued. The reason given was that some of our Conference churches had failed to cooperate with the American Baptist Convention in the New World Movement. This movement was a part of the Interchurch World Movement and had the enthusiastic backing of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The following year the American Baptist Publication Society discontinued its support of John Ward but carried John Hedeen on the payroll as long as he lived. It is difficult to see how the work could have been carried on during the formative years of the Conference, if the American societies had not given a helping hand.

In 1923 the Conference voted to purchase automobiles for the two Johns — John Hedeen and John Ward. A substantial sum of money was subscribed by the delegates. One may say that the "horse and buggy age" had come to an end by this action.

In many ways this transitional period had been a time of discouragement as well as of adjustment. But it had to come, and some churches came through easier than others. It was not only the language that constituted a problem, difficult as that was. The churches were facing a new concept regarding their mission and policy. That they could no

longer remain Swedish was apparent, but what would happen if they became altogether American? Should they continue as a distinct group, or should they make overtures to the American Baptist Convention? Very few churches chose the latter. The long transitional period from one language to another had retarded the progress. But, unknowingly to the seers and the prophets, the Illinois Conference was at this stage only a short distance from a new and most encouraging era.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISSIONARY EXPANSION

Fourth Quarter-Century 1931 - 1956

THIE seventy-fifth anniversary of the Conference was observed in the midst of one of the worst economic depressions in the history of this country. In the Chicago area alone approximately 200 banks closed, which in many cases meant total loss to the depositors. People of wealth suddenly became poor, and countless numbers of the employed lost their jobs or were compelled to accept lower wages.

While the nation was trying to regain its economic equilibrium, the churches were heroically holding their own at the price of real sacrifice on the part of the members. Expansion of the work, whether local or Conference-wide, was at a standstill. No new churches were organized until at the very end of the thirties.

The diamond jubilee was held in the Addison Street church, Chicago, May 21-24, 1931. The Conference numbered twenty-nine churches with 5,267 members. Axel A. Anderson presided as moderator. The conference sermon was preached by Ellis E. Eklof, Sr. V. E. Hedberg was the host pastor. The reports were largely about the relief work that had been carried on by the churches for the needy and unemployed. The previous few years had been dark and the future did not look very bright.

The outbreak of the second world war in the fall of 1939 accelerated the economic recovery, as the war industry got

into gear. Prosperity, even if it was blood bought, was in the offing. Losses were being regained and money began to flow more freely. It took, however, nearly a decade before the churches received the full benefit of the financial upsurge, but it was on the way.

A NEW ERA

With prosperity came a tremendous building boom all over the nation. And the churches were not overlooked. Within the last ten years several new and costly churches have been erected, and almost every congregation has added a new parsonage to its property. According to the latest available figures, the total value of church buildings and parsonages in the Illinois Conference amount to more than three and one-third million dollars! This is more than the reported value of all the church buildings and parsonages in our entire denomination thirty-five years ago.

This prosperous era engendered new life in our churches. The transition from Swedish to English had been completed in all the churches. Even the Conference minutes changed language in 1932. The field, which up to this time had been much limited to the Swedish people, expanded to take in the whole state and its inhabitants. A new day had dawned. The churches Americanized their names, and in 1945 the Conference itself followed the trend and took on the designation Baptist Conference of Illinois.

The past twenty-five years have also witnessed a substantial growth in the number of churches and in membership. Until 1955, the Illinois Conference was second only to Minnesota in membership. God has richly blessed and is blessing our Conference with new churches and members. The population trend is away from the large city to the

suburbs or to areas where new communities are being built with incredible speed. The opportunities for new missionary activities and eventually new churches are greater than the size of our Conference budget. But even some of our small churches have caught the pioneer spirit and ventured out in faith to start new work, and the results have been most rewarding.

As frequently is the case, a new work may have an altogether unscheduled beginning. The history of the Edgewood church is a glorious example of the truth that "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." Two little boys in the country school, both being in the first grade, became friends. They visited each other's home, and it was found that both boys had Christian parents. Before long the parents became acquainted, which resulted in much good Christian fellowship. One family had four and the other three children. They loved to sing together, and how they could sing! Soon a Bible Club was started in one of the homes, then prayer meetings, and before long a Sunday school was going strong. To crown the good work, a church was organized in the community.

Much of the progress during the last ten or twelve years can be credited to the diligence of our missionary Victor Sherling. He is well acquainted with the field and recognizes the opportunities when they knock at the door. It is disheartening both to him and the board members when opportunities must be passed up for lack of funds or when small struggling churches must be denied financial help for the same reason.

The camp work at Round Lake has become the high spot of Conference activities. The camps — and there are several of them each summer — are gaining in popularity with the boys and girls. During the summer of 1955 more

than 800 campers availed themselves of the camp facilities. In addition, almost every weekend during the spring and fall groups from churches made use of the grounds.

Camp Youngquist at Cameron, Illinois, has become an equally popular gathering place for the young people and children in the western part of the state.

Many of the youngsters attending these camps will become tomorrow's leaders of our churches and of the Conference. It is therefore important that they be given the best possible teaching and guidance.

RELATION TO AMERICAN BAPTISTS

In reading through the old records of the Conference one is impressed with the cordial attitude shown our Conference and churches by the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Baptist Publication Society. A most friendly spirit of cooperation existed, and the Conference, which was on the receiving end, was always ready to acknowledge with gratitude the generous support that the ABHMS gave the small churches and the ABPS extended to the colporteurs and missionaries. Without this financial assistance the work would have suffered greatly. At each annual conference, until about 1920, representatives of the American Baptist societies were on the program for missionary addresses. This representation also included the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, through which the contributions for foreign missions were channeled.

Unlike some of the other state conferences, the Illinois Conference never had any official affiliation with the State Convention. In 1918 our Conference received an invitation from the Illinois State Convention proposing a closer co-operation, but this invitation was declined. Our Conference

replied that it was satisfied to continue to deal directly with the American Baptist Home Mission Society. But, as referred to earlier, the friendly cooperation with the ABHMS came to an abrupt end in 1921. Later on the cooperation ceased also with the ABPS. The Conference was forced to shoulder the financial responsibilities for both the missionary's support and the needy churches. This trial became a blessing in disguise, creating as it did a greater solidarity and interest in the work. The Conference had reached maturity!

We must not neglect to acknowledge that for many years the churches have received much financial help from the Board of Home Missions of the General Conference. Aside from monetary contributions, the very presence of the General Conference headquarters within the borders of the Illinois Conference has greatly benefitted the state work and the churches. When the new headquarters building in Chicago was erected in 1951, provision was made for office space for the Illinois Conference.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

THE future is just as much unknown to us as it was to the pioneers a century ago. It was not possible for Palmquist, Wiberg and Nilsson to foresee the growth and development of the work which they began without the slightest pretense as to bigness and importance. Sometimes the future can be predicted by the trends in an organization, but our fathers in the faith could not discern any trends in those early days. Their chief concern was to be a blessing to their countrymen; they did "not ask to see the distant scene"—one step was enough for them. We can well imagine how happy and grateful they would be, if they could see now the accomplishments of the past one hundred years.

Our vista of the future is not much clearer, although we have the knowledge of a remarkable history as our guide and almost unlimited resources at our disposal. The future is still enigmatic to us, for we are the people of the present, of today. Even if we think we know present trends, we are poor prognosticators, because we do not know what direction the winds may take a decade or a generation hence. Less than fifty years ago some of our leaders predicted the end of our denomination as an independent organization. We were to pass out with the Swedish language and become a part of the larger Baptist body. This did not happen.

Nationalism and the language were, nevertheless, the

cords that held our work together in those early years. If the language of our spiritual forebears had been English, we would not have been observing a centennial as a conference. The language and the homogeneity of the members were elements that cemented the churches together in one purpose and one fellowship.

We have every reason to believe, however, that our Conference will continue to work and grow along the same pattern as it does today. Much depends, of course, on the future leadership and whether our churches will maintain the distinctive Baptist principles they are now embracing and proclaiming. In this our centennial year, the Baptists of America are much divided doctrinally and otherwise into more than a score of denominations, and some of the groups are by nature combative and competitive. Notwithstanding this regrettable situation, the Baptists have had a phenomenal growth in this country and number now more than 18,000,000 members, as many as several of the other large Protestant denominations put together.

The future of any organization depends upon whether it meets a real need within the scope of its activities and upon the unity of purpose within the group. God has been pleased to bless our efforts, because we have earnestly sought to do a task that nobody else has been assigned to do. During the major part of our history this particular job concerned the salvation of Americans of a certain nationality. Our field now is unlimited, and our responsibility is commensurably greater. How well we meet this challenge depends on our faithfulness to God's Word doctrinally, to the Holy Spirit experimentally, to Christ's command evangelistically, and on our willingness to work together in harmony and loyalty.

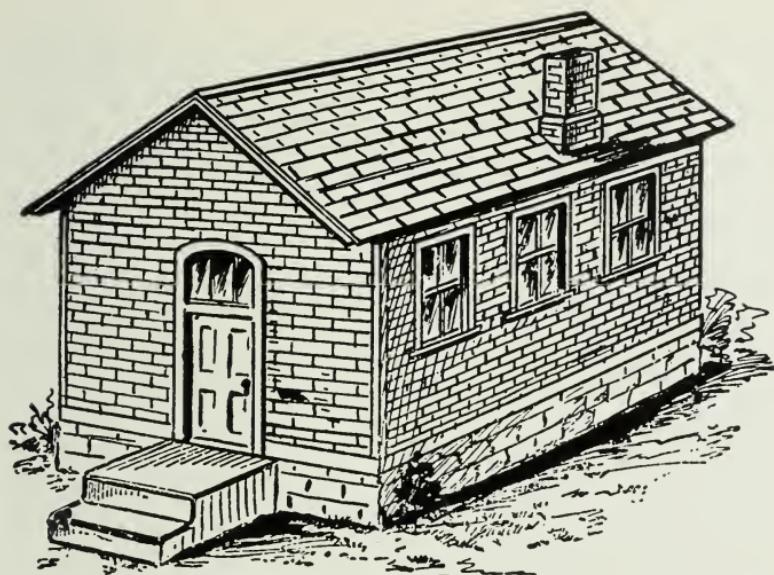
By faith, hope and love — the three great Christian in-

centives that will never lose their power — we will move on into another century, “confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

PART TWO

THE CHURCHES

OUR CHURCHES



First Swedish Baptist church edifice in America. Built in 1855 at Rock Island, Illinois.



Addison Street Church, Chicago



Grace Church, Chicago



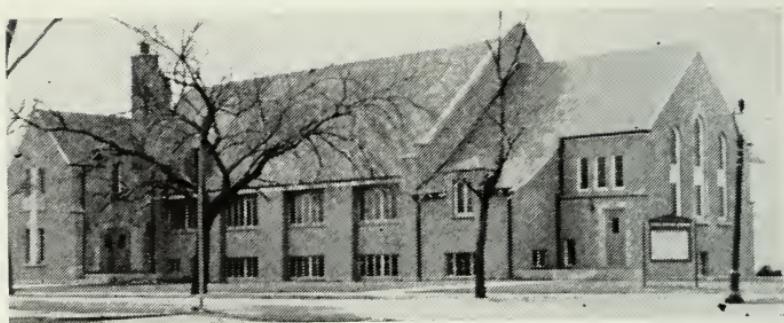
Elim Church, Chicago



Salem Church, Chicago



Central Avenue Church, Chicago



Temple Church, Chicago



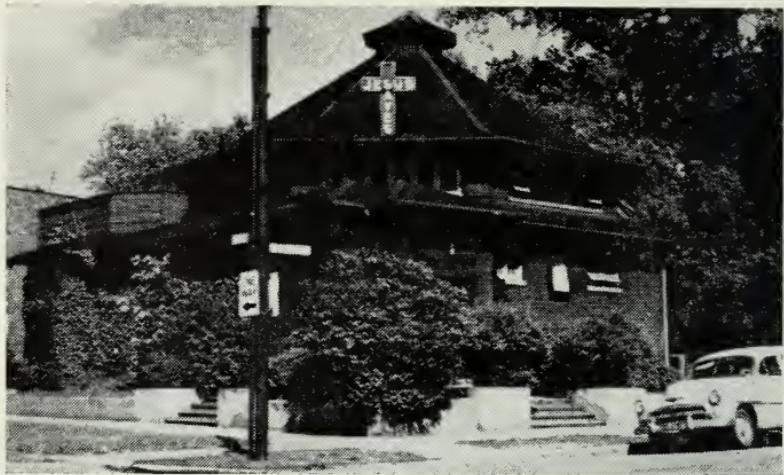
Fairfield Avenue Church, Chicago



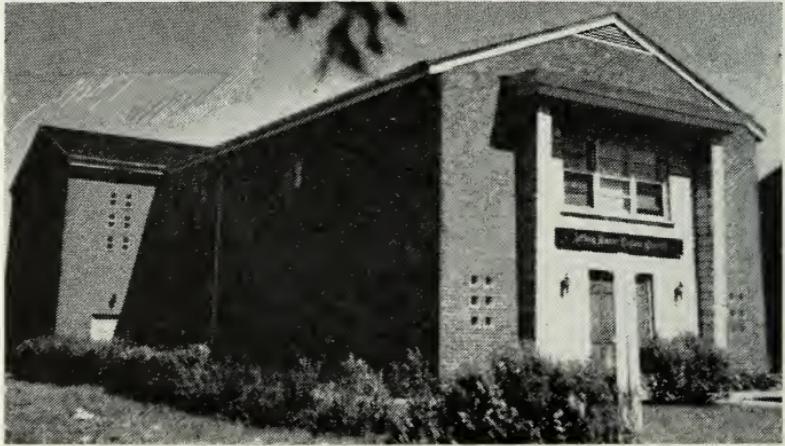
Edgewater Church, Chicago



Northwest Church, Chicago



South Shore Church, Chicago



Jeffery Manor Church, Chicago



Edgewood Church, Naperville



Bethel Church, Chicago



First Church, Markham



Calvary Church, Evanston

CHAPTER NINE

PRESENT CONFERENCE CHURCHES

Kildare Avenue, Chicago — 1864

THIS church, organized February 21, 1864, is affiliating with our Conference this centennial year. Its origin was Danish, but several of the early members were Swedes, having come from the Swedish Baptist church which was disbanded in 1864. Two years later the Swedes withdrew to organize what is now the Addison Street Baptist Church. During the years the Danish church has experienced divisions, mergers and changes but always retained its testimony for God. The present edifice was erected at Kildare and Belden Avenues in 1918. The following year the name was changed from First Danish Baptist Church to Kildare Avenue Baptist Church. The pastor's name is Oliver J. Parish.

Addison Street, Chicago — 1866

The Addison Street Baptist Church was organized August 19, 1866, as the First Swedish Baptist Church with thirty-eight charter members. The Civil War, which had deprived the earlier church of its manpower, was now over and some of the soldiers had returned. The Swedish colony on the near north side Chicago had grown by several thousand immigrants, and although a number of the members of the defunct Swedish church had united with the Danish

Baptist church, there was nevertheless an upsurge of longing for the reestablishment of a Swedish church.

In the summer of 1866 three ministers came to Chicago, namely Olof Lindh, N. E. Axling and John Ring, who with their wives became charter members of the church. John Ring was elected pastor with the princely salary of \$150.00 a year. In the spring of 1868 the new congregation built a house of worship on what is now Cleveland Avenue and Oak Street. In October, 1871, during the pastorate of John Alexis Edgren, the church building was reduced to ashes in the Chicago fire. A new building was erected at the same location and in 1912 the present building at Addison Street and Magnolia Avenue was dedicated.

Addison has had a galaxy of well known pastors, such as J. A. Edgren, John Ongman, Eric Wingren, P. A. Hjelm, G. Arvid Hagstrom, Thorsten Clafford, Eric Carlson, V. E. Hedberg, Eric N. Lindholm, Henry Wingblade, Walter O. Olson, John A. Wilcox and since 1955, Aymond Anderson.

Grace, Chicago — 1874

This church was organized March 11, 1874, by twelve members under the name Second Swedish Baptist Church. In the beginning the church was successfully served by seminary students. The regular pastorates began with Editor Eric Wingren, when he came from Sweden in 1880. Other well known pastors have been Eric Sandell, W. A. Backlund, G. Holmberg, O. J. Engstrand, P. A. Hjelm, J. W. Hjertstrom, Eric Scherstrom, F. C. Hamlin, Herman Litorin, E. E. Eklof, John A. Swanson, Donald Peterson, Robert I. Wells and, since 1953, James E. Fryar.

Grace church has had several locations during its history. The first services were held at 25th Street near Wentworth

Avenue. Other places of worship have been located at Armour Avenue near 31st Street, Wells and 31st Streets, 67th and May Streets, and since 1917 at 7848 South Normal Avenue. The Grace church is in a real sense the mother church of all the Chicago south side churches and several suburban churches.

Bethany, Moline — 1876

The Moline church occupies a unique place in the centenary history of the Conference. From the beginning it was closely linked together with Rock Island. Two of the three members who constituted the Rock Island church at its inception lived in Moline. Regular services were held alternately in the two cities. The meetings in Moline were held in the homes of the members. In 1866 a meeting house was erected at 6th Avenue and 13th Street, but it was not until May 7, 1876, that seventy-four members of the Rock Island church decided to organize themselves into a church. The name given it was the Swedish Baptist Church of Moline. In 1916 it was popularly called the Swedish Temple, and in 1936 the name was changed to the Bethany Baptist Church.

All the pastors have made a name for themselves in the annals of our denomination. They are Olof Okerson, L. L. Frisk, Olof Lindh, Jonas Stadling, P. A. Hjelm, P. P. Peterson, O. A. Enblom, Theodore Grandin, Axel Wester, Bennet Erickson, J. A. Jader, Detlof Lofstrom, Carl Vingren, E. A. Lagerstrom, J. Alfred Lindberg, B. L. Carlton, Martin Erikson, Magnus Berglund, E. E. Eklof and Don P. Shogren. Richard Turnwall became its pastor in 1956.

While the new sanctuary was under construction, 1954-1956, the services were held at the Thomas Jefferson school.

It seems altogether fitting that the Behany church should be the host to the Centennial Conference. It was in this vicinity (Rock Island) that the Conference was organized one hundred years ago and it was in the Moline church the golden jubilee was observed in 1906. This year the Bethany church is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

Temple, Rockford — 1880

Olof Lindh writes in his *Minnen* that he visited Rockford as early as 1868 and found one Swedish Baptist there. At that time the Swedish population of Rockford was estimated at 2,000. In the late seventies several students from Edgren's seminary made preaching tours to Rockford. In 1880 some Baptists from Sweden and also a family from Chicago came to Rockford and with this reenforcement the courageous group, numbering twelve, met in the State Street Baptist Church on September 11, 1880, to organize the Scandinavian Baptist Church of Rockford. In 1894 the name was changed to the First Swedish Baptist Church and in 1939 to the Temple Baptist Church.

The first meetingplace was a hayloft on 10th Avenue, between 8th and 9th Streets. Later, meetings were held in the State Street church and in Union Hall. In 1883 the church moved into its first building at 213 South 5th Street. The second church edifice was built in 1887 at 4th Avenue and 7th Street, and in 1908 the present beautiful sanctuary at 5th Avenue and 8th Street was erected. L. J. Ahlstrom, one of the charter members, became the first pastor. He was succeeded by Christopher Silene. Other well known pastors were J. P. Forsell, U. N. Brauer, P. Swartz, Magnus Larson, C. W. Sundmark, J. Alfred Erikson, Eric Carlson, P. Alfred Peterson, E. J. Nordlander, Jacob Peter-

son, G. A. Gustavson and J. Leonard Carroll. The present pastor, Harold Christenson, assumed the work in 1956.

Bethel, Joliet — 1881

The First Swedish Baptist Church of Joliet was organized in the American Baptist church, October 9, 1881, by nine members, who came by letter from the American church. This church also opened its building to the new church for services, which usually were conducted by students from the seminary in Morgan Park. C. M. Nelson became the first pastor in 1884. During his brief pastorate of only a few months the small group built its first house of worship.

A. P. Hanson was the next pastor. He served until 1891. Then followed the long pastorate of P. G. Holmberg, who continued for thirty-five years, or until 1926. In 1891 a chapel was built at Richards Street and Colburn Avenue, and in 1893 the present church building at Jackson and Herkimer Streets was begun and completed in 1897. The name of the church was changed to Bethel Baptist Church in 1936. Among the pastors, who followed P. G. Holmberg, are Carl A. Olsson, Martin Hamlin, C. B. Sanders, Maurice Lawson, A. R. Appelquist, Rueben L. Dahl and, since 1956, Charles W. Ferguson.

Temple, Chicago — 1882

A young man, C. E. Gordh, member of the Second (Grace) church, gathered some Swedish newcomers in Pullman for spiritual edification. As a result of this effort the First Swedish Baptist Church of Pullman was organized October 8, 1882. The following day Gordh died of typhoid fever. Meetings were held at the Rock Island depot, 111th

Street and Langley Avenue, until 1887, when the Church rented a hall in the Arcade at 111th Place and Cottage Grove Avenue. In 1889 a new building at 111th Street and Edbrooke Avenue was erected, and sixty-six years later, in June, 1955, the present attractive edifice at 107th Street and Emerald Avenue was dedicated.

In 1893 the name of the church was changed to the Fourth Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, in 1930 to Roseland Swedish Baptist Church, and in 1943 to Roseland Temple Baptist Church. The ministry of the church has throughout the years been entrusted to good pastors: G. Lundquist, P. Swartz, G. Liljeroth, E. J. Nordlander, J. W. Hjertstrom, Eric Sandell, John A. Swanson, Amandus Carlson, J. S. Lundgren, E. Hamlin, E. Carneh, A. B. Nelson, Carl A. Levin, F. Elmgren, Rodger W. Goodman, Wilbur S. Sorley, Arden W. Finke, and Wm. Gustafson since 1949.

Tabernacle, La Porte, Indiana — 1884

Seven members constituted the First Swedish Baptist Church of La Porte, when it was organized January 5, 1884. Many discouragements, both regarding location of the church and the small membership, made the work difficult. While the seminary was still in Chicago the church was served by students. The state missionaries have also kept La Porte under their watchful care, and for many years La Porte was the central point for missionaries who labored in neighboring communities. Among the regular pastors may be mentioned Henry Nelson, Olaf Taflin, E. W. Olson, Arthur Erickson, Gordon Johnson and Wm. Gustafson. The present pastor, Laurence Nydegger, came to the field in 1948. Some years ago the name of the church was changed to the Baptist Tabernacle.

Salem, Chicago — 1885

From a comparatively humble origin the Salem Baptist Church has grown both in membership and missionary influence to become one of the leading churches in the General Conference. The work began with a few families meeting in the homes for prayer. Then a Sunday school was organized in 1883, and on October 10, 1885, the church was formed with eighteen charter members under the name of the Swedish Baptist Church of Englewood. When the Swedish language ceased to be used in public services the name was changed to the Emerald Avenue Baptist Church and in 1954 to the Salem Baptist Church. The following year the church moved from its location at 59th Street and Emerald Avenue into its new and beautiful edifice at 99th Street and Claremont Avenue.

Mighty men of God have occupied the pulpit in the Salem church: P. Swartz, A. W. Backlund, J. P. Forsell, C. G. Lagergren, Eric Rosen, Eric Carlson, Olof Hedeen, Fredrik Linden, F. C. Hamlin, Carl A. Olsson, G. Arvid Hagstrom, Virgil A. Olson, and S. Bruce Fleming, who became the pastor in 1952. In 1928 a group of forty-nine members left the church to organize the Foster Park Baptist Church.

Calvary, Evanston — 1886

The origin of the Evanston church dates back to May, 1882, when some members of the First (Addison) church, Chicago, met to discuss the possibility of starting a mission. It was decided to commence holding Gospel services in homes and in the North Evanston school building. Evanston at that time, with its Northwestern University and aristocracy, was not the easiest field for a Swedish Baptist church,

but on June 9, 1886, thirty-two members, who had received letters of transfer from the Addison Street church, organized themselves into the Swedish Baptist Church of Evanston, now Calvary Baptist Church.

The first house of worship was erected in 1892. The present sanctuary at Elmwood Avenue and Lake Street was dedicated in July, 1895. The church has been served by the following pastors: N. E. Nelson, John Olander, Carl A. Johnson, Chas. Palm, A. G. Hall, F. V. Hedeen, R. A. Arlander, John A. Swanson, J. Alfred Erikson, G. E. Wallendorf, Eric Scherstrom, Emil T. Carlson, Wm. Turnwall, Lester E. Thompson, C. B. Sanders, Cecil Wagstaff, Walter E. Julien and, since 1955, James Schubring.

Immanuel, Monmouth — 1888

Sixteen charter members constituted the Swedish Baptist Church of Monmouth, when it was organized September 13, 1888. C. A. Holmgren, the first pastor, was excluded from the church at his own request after having served only a few months. This sad experience put a damper on the faith and courage of the little flock of believers. The church, however, progressed slowly under trying circumstances. The pastorates were brief. During the first eleven years the church had no less than seven pastors. At one time (1899) the meetinghouse was mortgaged to pay the pastor's salary.

In 1924 the church decided to change its name to the Immanuel Baptist Church and thus make it easier to appeal to the non-Swedish population of the city. That move was a decided advantage to the work. In 1931 the church experienced a revival that resulted in a large increase in membership. The first meetinghouse was located at West Archer Avenue and North E Street. In 1912 the present building at 409 South First Street was erected.

The following list of pastors, who have served during the years, is partial: J. A. Huggerth, Uno Brauer, A. Jacobson, A. O. Laurence, L. E. Peterson, R. J. Peterson, E. H. Olson, Martin A. Larson, E. Hamlin, G. L. Lindstedt, Herbert R. Cederberg, Clarence E. Wallin, J. C. Brumfield, Wendell M. Johnson, A. E. Belstrom, Wm. Gustafson, and since 1949, Victor O. Erickson.

Calvary, Sycamore — 1888

While W. A. Backlund was state missionary in Illinois he visited Sycamore in April, 1888, and held meetings in a home. Only a few attended, but two souls were saved in the first service. On July 16 of the same year seven were baptized in the American Baptist church. In the evening of the same day ten persons, united in the faith, formed the Swedish Baptist Church of Sycamore, now known as Calvary Baptist Church. The first pastor was O. L. Swanson, who began his work there in the spring of 1890 and continued until January 1, 1893, when he went to Assam as a missionary. During his ministry the church built its house of worship.

Because of a lack of financial resources the church has not always had a regular pastor and at times it has shared the minister with the De Kalb church. Some of the pastors have been H. E. Johnson, Roy L. Ferris, Paul Tatman and, since 1951, Walton H. Veurink. The ministerial brothers, Ray, Lawrence, Everett and Robert Swanson, grew up in the atmosphere of the Sycamore church.

Bethel, Galesburg — 1888

The present church in Galesburg—Bethel Baptist Church — was organized November 22, 1888, with eight charter

members. O. F. Carlson, a student at Knox College and a member of the First Baptist Church, became the first pastor and served until 1894. The services were held for a time in the First church and later in a rented hall. A church building was erected in 1898 on North Chambers Street. In 1937 the name of the church, which until this time had been the First Swedish Baptist Church, was changed to North Chambers Street Baptist Church, and in 1949 it was changed again, this time to the Bethel Baptist Church. In May, 1956, the church had the joy of moving into its new building at North Academy Street and Fremont Avenue.

The history of Bethel recognizes especially the services of Eric Cederoth, who was the beloved superintendent of the Sunday school for twenty-seven years, or until he moved to Chicago in 1923. Pastors: O. F. Carlson, Magnus Berglund, Carl Nyquist, G. Newquist, Axel Wester, P. E. Sorbom, J. S. Lundgren (two periods), N. Werner Nelson, A. Liliemark, P. Engelbrekth, John Ward, J. J. Oberg, Robert Klingberg, and, since 1941, Roland Holmberg.

Central Avenue, Chicago — 1891

From an apparently insignificant incident the Baptist work in Austin, on Chicago's west side, had its start. A student from the seminary in Morgan Park, F. O. Carlson, made a visit to Oak Park and found friends there from Sweden, whom he encouraged to begin Baptist work in Austin together with two families living in Austin. In the early nineties Austin was a new community, into which Swedes and others moved to build homes. Following Carlson's suggestion a sewing circle and a Sunday school were started and students from the seminary began to hold regular services in a vacant store at the corner of Chicago and Mayfield

Avenues. On August 18, 1891, the Austin Swedish Baptist Church was organized with fifteen charter members.

The great influx of families into Austin from Chicago contributed much to the rapid growth of the church. Soon the store became inadequate, and the church found it necessary to find a new meetingplace. This started an interesting program of building and rebuilding until, in 1913, the present church edifice was completed. In 1955 an educational building was added to the church. The name Central Avenue Baptist Church was adopted in 1936.

The church has been served by C. A. Sahlquist, John Samuelson, J. A. Carlson, C. W. Sundmark, Swaney Nelson, Swan A. Engwall, Everett Swanson and Gordon G. Johnson, who came to the church in 1951.

Fairfield Avenue, Chicago — 1891

The Fairfield Avenue Baptist Church was organized December 16, 1891, as the Humboldt Park Swedish Baptist Church. Sixteen members, all from the First (Addison) church, constituted the new organization. Previous to the forming of the church three families from the First church had moved to Humboldt Park and met in the homes for spiritual edification. On occasions they were ministered to by John Ongman and later by P. A. Hjelm, pastors of the First church. The first organized form of work was a ladies' sewing circle. Then a Sunday school was begun in the summer of 1891 in a rented hall. The present church building at Fairfield Avenue and Cortland Street was dedicated in 1902. The name Fairfield Avenue Baptist Church was adopted in 1936.

The following pastors have ministered to the church: Gustaf Carlson, Martin Carlson (two periods), Bennet

Erickson (three periods), L. J. Olson, P. A. Hjelm, M. Hydehn, E. W. Olson, Axel Wall, Victor Norlin, A. E. Lysell, Wm. Gustafson, Lawrence Swanson, Milo Nixon, Donald Forbes, and Wm. L. Fisk.

First, Geneva — 1894

The First Baptist Church of Geneva was organized October 24, 1894, by seven members from the church in Batavia. J. A. Nystrom carried on preaching services for the first three years. P. Ockerstrom served as pastor in 1903 and during his ministry the congregation started to build a house of worship, which was completed in June, 1904. When the church in Batavia disbanded about 1903, the remaining members transferred their membership to the Geneva church.

The church has not grown large in membership, but it has all through the years carried on a faithful ministry in the community. Some of the regular pastors have been: Gunnar Jansen, C. A. Wicklund, A. J. Hulbert, Russell Haggard, Edward Henry, Lloyd D. Tebo, Elwood Kemmerer, Palmer Peterson, Wm. Cameron and, since 1954, Robert D. Culver, professor at Wheaton College.

Immanuel, Waukegan — 1895

The history of Waukegan church dates back to November 10, 1895, when a few immersed believers of Swedish descent, members of the local American Baptist church, banded themselves together into a congregation to be known as the Swedish Baptist Church. The following spring C. L. Wallman became the first pastor. The first meetings were held in a Mission Hall, Browning Avenue and South Sheridan Road. In the fall of 1898 the church building at Gene-

see and May Streets was completed, and on April 2, 1950, the first service was held in the new edifice at 1016 Grand Avenue.

The work during the first twenty years seems to have been quite difficult. A turn for the better came in the middle twenties, when under the ministry of A. J. Hulbert, the membership nearly doubled in four years. A similar experience came again to the church ten years later, during Lester Thompson's pastorate. Since then the membership has steadily and rapidly increased. The name of the church was changed to Immanuel Baptist Church in 1926. In addition to the pastors mentioned, the following have served the church: John Vidberg, Nels Lidney, G. E. Wallendorf, Vincent Bennett, Lloyd Dahlquist, Vernon Pearson, J. Gordon Peterson, and, since 1951, Walter O. Olson.

Elim, Chicago — 1899

A group of immersed believers, most of them members of the Second (Grace) Baptist Church, met February 5, 1897, to discuss the advisability of organizing a church in Grand Crossing. It was decided to proceed and to begin with prayer meetings in the homes. As in many similar instances in Chicago the students from the seminary in Morgan Park took an active interest in the work. Two years later, January 14, 1899, the Elim church was organized with thirty-three charter members. Emil Friborg, a student in the seminary, had been preaching in the mission and continued his ministry for another year.

In 1900 G. E. Wallendorf became the pastor and continued for sixteen fruitful years. The first church home, erected in 1902, was located at 75th Street and Kimbark Avenue. In 1910 the present edifice at 73rd Street and

Greenwood Avenue was built and dedicated. Vitally interested in bringing the children and the young people in closer touch with the church, Wallendorf inaugurated in 1911 the plan of a combined or unified Sunday school and morning service which plan became the pattern for several other churches a generation ago.

Wallendorf was succeeded by C. A. Aldeen. Other pastors followed: Ephraim Hamlin, Eric Carlson, Sidney Nelson, Edwin Bonander, Carl H. Lundquist. Howard Carlson has been the pastor since 1955.

Calvary, Kewanee — 1901

The Swedish Baptist Church of Kewanee — since 1931 the Calvary Baptist Church — was organized September 28, 1901, with twelve charter members. A trying period for the church was the severe depression in 1907, when many members left Kewanee to seek employment elsewhere. The church has had both discouraging and encouraging experiences but has always maintained her testimony. Two of the professors at Bethel Seminary, Edwin and Reuben Omark, came from the Calvary church. The present house of worship, at First and Walnut Streets, was built in 1903.

The following pastors have served the church: E. A. Lagerstrom, Fred Wahlberg, Gust. Engstrom, John Ward, Nels Lidney, Hjalmar Carlson, Gustave Edwin Anderson, Albin Appelquist, F. A. Johnson, John Logan, A. J. Hulbert, Herbert Gotaas, E. G. Nelson, George Sprague, and John Cromwell, since 1954.

Immanuel, Chicago Heights — 1902

Conference missionary R. A. Arlander reported to the Conference in 1902 that he had made several visits to Chi-

cago Heights and found a number of Baptists there who were interested in organizing a church. On July 11, 1902, the Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago Heights was formed with ten charter members. Axel Grahn, a student at the Morgan Park seminary, became its first pastor.

The work had its ups and downs during the succeeding years or until some twenty years ago when S. E. Waldemer became the pastor. He led the church in efforts to reach the community regardless of nationality. The name of the church was changed in 1935 to Immanuel Baptist Church. Having some members living at Frankfort, the Immanuel church started a mission there, which in 1939 resulted in a church. Among the nearly twenty pastors who have served this church are the following: Reynold Lund, Oscar W. Johnson, David Holmberg, Carl Johnson, Hjalmar Carlson, S. E. Waldemer, Arden Finke, Lester Rasmussen, James Riley. The present pastor is Henry Nelson.

Bethel, Chicago — 1904

From a mission society, organized in 1901, of Swedish and Finnish speaking Baptists, the First Finnish Baptist Church came into existence March 19, 1904. The charter members numbered fourteen. The leaders were Edward Fleming, a student at the seminary in Morgan Park, and A. M. Wickstrom, M.D. Meetings were held at 135 Sedgwick Street and later in the La Salle Street Baptist Church. In 1919 the church purchased the Norwegian Free Church building at 5000 West Ohio Street and used it until the present building at Walton and Lavergne Streets was erected in 1929.

Until 1908 the work was carried on in both Swedish and

Finnish, but by that time the Finns had left to organize their own work. The name of the church was then changed to the Swedish-Finnish Baptist Church, and in 1933 to the Bethel Baptist Church. The following pastors have ministered to the church during the years: A. J. Stormans (two periods), Matts Esselstrom, Herman Mattson, Isak Berg, Floyd Ankerberg, James E. Selander, and, since 1955, James E. Rentz. The church became affiliated with our Conference in 1947.

Tabernacle, Kenosha, Wisconsin — 1904

Swedish Baptists came to Kenosha as early as 1893. They united with the First Baptist Church. As their number increased, they began to hold meetings in the homes and occasionally in the First church. In 1896 they organized a mission and the following year a Sunday school. In this work they were assisted by students from the seminary in Morgan Park.

On May 29, 1904, the First Swedish Baptist Church was organized with twenty-one charter members, M. Mattson and Charles Oslund being the leaders. C. Adolph Anderson became the first pastor. In 1928 the name of the church was changed to the Baptist Tabernacle. The present house of worship, at 24th Avenue and 63rd Street, was built in 1910. Formerly affiliated with the Wisconsin Conference, the Tabernacle church came into the Illinois Conference in 1931. Pastors: C. Adolph Anderson, Axel Wall, C. Alfred Carlson, Karl M. Lundh, F. Elmgren, G. E. Wallendorf, J. O. Cederberg, George A. E. Salstrand, Stanley Rendahl, Herbert Freeman, Kenneth Kolmodin, and, since 1953, J. Gordon Platt. The church carries on a radio program known as "Words of Life on Wings of Song."

Hinsdale — 1905

A mission was started in Hinsdale by two laymen on Thanksgiving Day, 1902. Meetings were held in a rented hall in Hinsdale and also in the Western Springs Baptist Church. The mission was organized into the Swedish Baptist Church May 13, 1905, with twenty-six charter members. In 1906 Gardner Hall, located on Lincoln Street, was purchased and became the church home until May 23, 1954, when the new building at Oak Street and Fuller Road was dedicated. In 1934 the name of the church was changed to the Hinsdale Baptist Church.

For several years the church was served mostly by seminary students and other ministers on a part time basis. Among those were E. Kardell, Hjalmar Ostrom, Jonas Gronlund, David F. Nygren, Isak Berg, Alex Olson, Adolf Nordell, Instanes Osborne and A. J. Cederfeldt. The first regular pastor was C. Ivar Johnson, who was followed by Herman Cederblad, Henry Berglind, A. J. Hulbert, Clifford Sandin, Drury Miller, Raymond Johnson, and Henry Lord, who came to Hinsdale in 1950.

Edgewater, Chicago — 1909

Baptist work in the Edgewater district began by members of the Lake View church in the summer of 1906, when a Sunday school was started in a rented hall at 5455 North Clark Street. Soon preaching services also were held, the preacher being a student from the seminary in Morgan Park. On March 21, 1909, the Edgewater Swedish Baptist Church was organized. All of the thirty-four charter members came from the Lake View church. A Congregational church on Rosehill Drive was rented, but already in Decem-

ber, 1910, the present building at Hollywood and Glenwood Avenues was ready for dedication. In 1954 an educational building was erected adjacent to the church. In 1956 the main auditorium was enlarged.

Pethrus Swartz, the first pastor, served for eight years. Other pastors followed: C. Th. Brodin, A. E. Belstrom, Axel A. Anderson, Jacob Peterson, H. A. Hermansen, Oriel Hansen and Paul Obinger.

Elim, Rockford — 1917

The pioneer preacher Eric Rosen was the prime mover in starting a new work in the South Park area of Rockford. The Second Swedish Baptist Church — in 1929 changed to Elim Baptist Church — was organized August 12, 1917, by eighteen members from the Temple Baptist Church, Rockford, and six others who united on confession of faith at the organizational meeting.

Eric Rosen supplied the pulpit for several months. In 1922 Eric Hallden became the pastor. He was followed by C. Axel Johnson, M. F. Johnson, A. E. Appelquist, Lloyd Tebo, and Dean Nemecek who began his ministry in 1951. The first meetingplace was located at 8th Street and 14th Avenue. The present church building at 16th Avenue and 10th Street was completed in 1923.

Westmont — 1923

The Westmont Baptist Church was organized February 11, 1923 with twelve charter members. It was affiliated with the Chicago Baptist Association until 1953, when it was received into our fellowship. The growth has been steady, and many improvements have been made. Two years ago the American Legion Building was rented to help accom-

modate the increased attendance. The present pastor, David S. Kimball, began his ministry with the church in January, 1952.

South Shore, Chicago — 1926

The South Shore Baptist Church is a merger of the Third and Tabernacle Baptist churches. The two were mother and daughter churches. Whereas the parting of the ways in 1893 was caused by misunderstanding, the merger on August 3, 1926, proved to be a harmonious union. The Third church property was sold to an Italian congregation and the Tabernacle church building became the location for the united work. The leader of the merger was C. Geo. Ericson, who at that time served as temporary pastor of the Third church in addition to his regular duties as associate editor of *The Standard*. The total membership at the time of the merger was 177, 84 from the Third church and 93 from the Tabernacle.

Gustaf A. Sword, who was back from Burma on an extended furlough as missionary, became the first pastor of the South Shore church. Other pastors have been: Alfred E. Lindberg, Clarence E. Wallin, Kenneth Piercy, S. Bruce Fleming and C. E. Granholm.

Calvary, Frankfort — 1939

In a real pioneer spirit nine Baptists, of which seven were members of the Immanuel Baptist Church in Chicago Heights, organized themselves, on December 10, 1939, into the Calvary Baptist Church of Lincoln Estates. Some years previous to this action the Immanuel church had sponsored a Sunday school in that community. When the church was organized, somebody presented it with a lot for a church

building at 79th Avenue. A building fund had also been started. Within a year the basement was built and used as a meetinghouse. The building was completed in 1944. About two years ago the name Frankfort replaced the name Lincoln Estates. Pastors: Philip LaBue, Olaf J. Nelson, Wm. N. Kerr, Arthur Contois and, since 1954, S. E. Waldemer.

Northwest, Chicago — 1945

The Northwest Baptist Church is the result of a merger of Lake View and Immanuel Baptist churches, the date of the merger being April 27, 1945. The ceaseless northwest trend of the population had affected the membership of both churches. Both began to look northwest for possible new locations. More or less as an experiment the Lake View church started a Sunday school at Devon and Western Avenues January 13, 1929. Since the Immanuel church showed an interest in cooperating with the Lake View church in this mission, the question of merger came up for consideration. It was voted down by the Lake View church and the mission was discontinued in June, the same year. The following January the Immanuel church opened a Sunday school at 6433 North California Avenue. In November, 1933, this "North Town Baptist Chapel" was taken over by the Illinois Conference but shortly thereafter it was disbanded because of lack of interest and financial support.

Early in 1945 the merger question was revived, and in three months the union was effected. The properties of the two churches were sold. Meetings were held for a few months in the Ravenswood Masonic Temple and from September 2, 1945, until January 8, 1950, in the Budlong School building, Foster and Washtenaw Avenues. The property at

Peterson and Francisco Avenues was acquired in the meantime. The new church was dedicated April 30, 1950. At the time of the merger the total membership was 476—310 from Lake View and 166 from Immanuel. Lloyd W. Dahlquist has been pastor of Northwest since 1946.

Grove Street, De Kalb — 1947

After nearly sixty years of Baptist witness in De Kalb, the pastor of the original church and the majority of the members gradually led the work away from the Conference, which caused dissension in the church. The final outcome was that a group of seventeen members, who desired to cooperate with the Conference, organized themselves into a new church, called the Grove Street Baptist Church. The date of organization is April 28, 1947. The church building became the property of the new church. The first pastor of the reorganized church was Harold Jensen. Paul Tatman has been the pastor since 1951.

First, Markham — 1948

Approximately eight years before the church was organized, small groups of Christians were praying for the establishment of an evangelical witness in the village of Markham. In 1948 Arden W. Finke, pastor of the Roseland Temple, supervised a canvass of the field. On June 17, 1948, the First Baptist Church was organized with seventeen charter members. The first meetingplace was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Dunsworth. Finke became the first pastor and served about one year. He was followed by Paul Larson, A. C. Habegger, and Ralph B. Gale, the present pastor.

The church building at 158th Street and Central Park

Avenue was first occupied for services on Easter Sunday, 1953.

West Allis, Wisconsin — 1949

The Beloit Road Baptist Church is located at 8339 West Beloit Road, West Allis, near Milwaukee. The work began in December, 1940, when Mr. H. D. Woodward invited neighborhood children to his home in Bronson Manor on Sunday mornings for a Bible story hour. This humble beginning led to the organization of the Fellowship Gospel Mission in the spring of 1942. The same year the present meetinghouse was built. On November 15, 1943, the name of the mission was changed to the Fellowship Gospel Church.

During Charles Pausley's pastorate the church voted to become a Baptist church and to affiliate with our Conference. At the same meeting, November 11, 1949, the name Beloit Road Baptist Church was adopted. The membership numbered twenty-eight. The pastors who have served the church since Mr. Pausley are Alaister Walker and, since 1951, Vernie E. Stoneberg.

Jeffery Manor, Chicago — 1949

The Jeffery Manor Baptist Church came into being because the Elim Baptist Church, Chicago, saw the need of a Baptist witness in this community. Meetings were held in the homes of interested people. In 1945 the work was taken over by the Illinois Conference and a part-time worker was engaged to survey the field and conduct services. In April, 1948, Stanley Olson began his ministry there, the services being held in the Luella Public school. There the church was organized January 23, 1949, with thirty-six charter members. Property was purchased at 99th Street

and Crandon Avenue and a church building was erected in 1951 and dedicated in January, 1952. Three ministers have served the church: Stanley Olson, Scott Kerr and Arthur H. Freeburg, the present pastor.

Grace, Crown Point, Indiana — 1950

The Gospel work at Crown Point, served by Arvian Habegger, voted in December, 1950, to become an independent Baptist church. In January, 1952, the church was incorporated as Grace Baptist Church. In 1952 it became affiliated with our Conference. Services were first held in the parsonage, but in May, 1953, the present church building was occupied and dedicated. Following Habeggar's ministry Mervin Tarvin became interim pastor. James Carney came to the field in August, 1952, and was succeeded by Wm. Van Der Veen in 1953.

Edgewood, Naperville — 1950

This church traces its origin to a Bible club, prayer meetings and a Sunday school, first meeting in a home, then in a garage and finally in a chapel. The beginning dates back to 1943. The Edgewood Baptist Church was organized November 26, 1950, with twenty-six charter members. The chapel, which was occupied for the first time in October, 1946, is located at Tuthill and Plank Roads.

During the formative years the work was carried on with the help of students from Wheaton College and the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. David Olson, now editor at Baptist Conference Press, was the first pastor to serve this group. The organization was effected during the ministry of F. William Elkin. Other pastors have been Theodore Stanley, Allen Marshall, and, since 1954, Wilbur Madsen.

Skokie Valley, Skokie — 1952

This rapidly growing work had its nucleus in the Skokie Bible Church. When several members of the Chicago north-side churches took up residence in the north suburban area and began to fellowship with the members of the Bible church, the question of establishing a Conference church somewhere in Glenview, Morton Grove or Skokie became vital and was shared by the Bible church. Consequently, the Bible church dissolved and the Skokie Valley Baptist Church was organized October 17, 1952, with eighty-five charter members.

Dr. Samuel Schultz of Wheaton College served as temporary pastor for more than a year and was succeeded by Arthur E. H. Barber in February, 1954. While making preparations for the erection of a church building on its property at Skokie Highway and Gross Point Road, the Sunday services are being held in the Sharp Corner school.

Homewood — 1952

The work at Homewood, south of Chicago, began when several Christian families in the community desired a Gospel ministry and engaged Robert Oman, a student at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, to survey the field. On July 15, 1951, a small group met in the Council Room of the Village Hall, under the leadership of Robert Oman, for Sunday school and worship services. On March 26, 1952, they voted to seek affiliation with the General Conference and on May 15, the same year, eighteen charter members organized the Homewood Baptist Church.

James M. Smith became the first regular pastor of the church. A new church building, located at 183rd Street and Governor's Highway, was dedicated in September, 1956.

Park View, Mokena — 1954

The Baptist work at Mokena began, when the pastor of the Frankfort church, Arthur Contois, started to explore the possibilities of establishing a Baptist witness in some neighboring town. He met some Baptists at Mokena, who expressed an interest in a Baptist work there. On August 3, 1954, eleven persons met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Rydell to ascertain what could be done in Mokena, and before the meeting was over a decision had been made to organize a church. The name adopted was Park View Baptist Church. Arthur Contois became its pastor.

In October, 1954, the church secured the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, rent free, for services, while plans were being formulated for a church building. In the summer, 1956, the congregation moved into its own building.

Valley View, Elgin — 1954

The initiative of a Baptist work in the Valley View area, near Elgin, was taken in the summer of 1950 by interested members of the First Baptist Church of Geneva. Nevin S. Beehler was called to be missionary pastor for this field, and in 1953 an attractive church building was erected on a spacious plot of ground on the Beloit Road. On January 31, 1954, the mission organized itself into a Baptist church, and at the evening service the same day the pastor had the joy of baptizing seventeen, the first baptismal service in the new church.

Hillside — 1955

The Baptist work at Hillside was first sponsored by the Bethel Baptist Church, Chicago. The first meeting was held

on September 13, 1953, in the American Legion Hall under the leadership of our state missionary Victor Sherling. Regular preaching services were conducted by Ivar Anderson of the Baptist headquarters staff until June, 1954, when Herbert H. Skoglund became the full time pastor. The meetingplace is the auditorium of the public school of Hillside. The mission was formally organized into the Hillside Baptist Church on March 13, 1955.

Riverdale — 1956

The Riverdale Baptist Church had its beginning in cottage prayer meetings first being held in September, 1954. As the prayer meetings continued under the supervision of our State Missionary, the group decided to rent the building at 13 West 144th Street and conduct Sunday services. On January 4, 1956, Donald Coddington from the Skokie Valley church was called to minister at Riverdale, and on May 11, 1956, the church was organized with twenty-five charter members. This church will be affiliating with the Illinois conference in 1956.

MISSIONS

A considerable number of missions have been started during the past century — too numerous to mention. Many of them developed into churches, while others served their day and disbanded. At present there are two hopeful missions being maintained largely by the Conference. They are:

Lake Zurich

This work, known as the Lake Zurich Baptist Fellowship, was begun in December, 1953, by a student at Northern

Baptist Theological Seminary. The meetings are held in the basement of the Masonic Temple.

Fox Lake

The Fox Lake Baptist Chapel is located near Round Lake. The mission began in the spring of 1955. In order to strengthen the work, the Sunday school, which had been meeting regularly at the Round Lake camp, was transferred to the Fox Lake mission.

CHAPTER TEN

FORMER CONFERENCE CHURCHES

CHURCHES THAT HAVE CEASED TO EXIST, MERGED OR LEFT
THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

Rock Island — 1852

THE first Swedish Baptist church on the American continent was organized at Rock Island, Illinois, on August 13, 1852, by three members who had been baptized by Gustaf Palmquist in the Mississippi river August 8. The charter members were Theodore Mankee, Peter Soderstrom and Mrs. Fredrika Boberg. The name of the new church was the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island. The first church building, located at Fifth Avenue, between 20th and 21st Streets, was erected in 1855.

Following the turn of the century the church became quite inactive. Several meetings were held to discuss the disposition of the property and the future of the church. Since the American Baptist Home Mission Society had a first mortgage of \$500 on the property, it demanded that the property be turned over to the Society. Finally, on March 20, 1930, the remaining few members of the church voted to convey by quit claim deed the church property to the First Baptist Church of Rock Island for the nominal sum of one dollar. The surviving members joined the First Church, and thus ended the history of the earliest church in our

Conference. On the wall inside the First church is a bronze tablet commemorating the event of the Swedes disbanding and joining this church.

Among the many pastors who served the Rock Island church, we may mention the following: Gustaf Palmquist, L. L. Frisk, N. E. Axling, Olof Lindh, A. B. Orgren, N. E. Nelson, P. Rosenholm, A. G. Lagerquist, David Holmberg and E. A. Carlson.

Chicago — 1854

The first Swedish Baptist to preach the Gospel in Chicago was L. L. Frisk. Gustaf Palmquist and F. O. Nilsson also visited Chicago with the result that on November 13, 1854, a Swedish Baptist church was organized. In 1857 it reported twenty-four members to the Conference. Due to unwise leadership and also because of the Civil War, which took many men away from their homes, the church disbanded in 1864.

Galesburg — 1857

One of the places closely associated with the early history of the Illinois Conference is Galesburg. Here Gustaf Palmquist took the stand which made him a pioneer among the people with whom he was henceforth to spend his life. On June 27, 1852, he was immersed and united with the First Baptist Church of Galesburg, and a month later he was ordained to the Gospel ministry by the same church. From Galesburg he went out to begin his labor as a Baptist minister.

To the fourth annual meeting of the Conference, held at Rock Island in June, 1859, L. L. Frisk reported that during the year a church of 26 members had been organized

at Galesburg. There are records that seem to indicate that a Swedish Baptist church existed in Galesburg as early as 1857. This seems to have been an active group, for in addition to maintaining the spoken Gospel ministry some men within the church started a periodical in 1859, known as *Frihetsvänn* (Friend of Freedom). A year later the paper changed its name to *Evangelisten*. The combined life span of the two papers was only two years.

For some reason or other the church did not thrive, partly no doubt due to the removal of most of its members to Altona and other places. The church went out of existence in the early sixties. Another church was organized in 1878. The present church in Galesburg dates back to 1888.

Altona — 1867

Altona presents a somewhat puzzling history. The biography of Gustaf Palmquist states that in addition to his labors in Rock Island-Moline and in Chicago he also visited several small churches, of which Altona is one. It seems that as early as 1857 there were a few converts there and that some of them were baptized. All but one of the members who had constituted the first church in Galesburg had moved to Altona and become the nucleus of the church in that village. The date of organization is February 21, 1867.

That year Olof Lindh became its pastor. He was succeeded by N. J. Rundquist the following year. A meeting-house was built in 1870. The church never grew strong but continued its existence until about the end of the first decade of this century. At the Conference in 1920 it was reported that the church property had been sold. One reason for the failure of the Altona church to prosper was that many of its members left the community and went west, particularly

to Stromsburg, Nebraska. The Annual of 1908 reports only thirteen members. The church was served by O. Bergstrom, L. Johanson, Carl Hasselblad and students.

Princeton — 1877

Princeton was settled by Swedes as early as 1850. Some time before 1877 a few immersed believers from Sweden had come to Princeton. These invited John Ongman, then pastor in Chicago, to hold a series of Gospel services, with the result that several of their countrymen believed and were baptized. On February 4, 1877, ten were immersed and a week later eight more followed the Lord in baptism. A Swedish Baptist church with twenty-one charter members was organized February 15, 1877.

Christopher Silene served as pastor during the first three years. He was followed by A. B. Orgren, J. M. Floden, A. P. Hanson, J. M. Schulene, Chas. Asplund, L. E. Peterson, W. A. Peterson, Aug. Westerberg, John Ward, Nels Lidney, Albin Appelquist. The last time the name Princeton appears in the Illinois Conference Annual is in the year book 1942.

New Bedford — 1881

In February, 1881, fourteen members received letters from the church in Princeton to organize a church in New Bedford. Little is known about this work, but it seems that the pastors at Princeton visited this small group occasionally. In 1892 the church reported to the Illinois Conference that the church building had not been in use for several years. In 1897 the report was more encouraging. At that time the membership was fifteen. For several years there was no report from the New Bedford church. At the Conference in

1915 the church reported that it had reorganized, taken the name the Thomas Baptist Church and become affiliated with the Ottawa Baptist Association.

Third, Chicago — 1882

On August 20, 1882, eleven immersed believers formed a Swedish Baptist church in South Chicago. Later this church became known as the Third Swedish Baptist Church. The church building was located at 9748 Avenue L. The congregation encountered some difficult years during its early history with the result that it became divided into two groups, one of which seceded and started the Tabernacle church in 1893. Most of the pastors were seminary students and stayed comparatively brief periods — eleven pastors in twelve years! A brighter day finally dawned for the Third church, but it never grew large. In 1926 it merged with the Tabernacle church to form the South Shore Baptist Church. Among the pastors serving the Third church were: G. Lundquist, George Lindhagen, O. C. Wieden, R. A. Arlander, J. A. H. Rosendahl, Axel F. Grahn, E. G. Okerlind, F. C. Hamlin, David Gustafson, C. V. Anderson and Albert Rose.

Batavia — 1883

The Batavia church was organized June 24, 1883, by nine members. From a sketch, written by the secretary, Chas. Sparre, in June, 1889, we learn that the church had previously had 37 members but that the membership at that time was only fifteen. By April, 1901, it had been reduced to eleven. In 1892 two members of the church purchased a lot and built a house, the top floor of which was made into a meetingplace seating 150 persons. At the Conference 1903

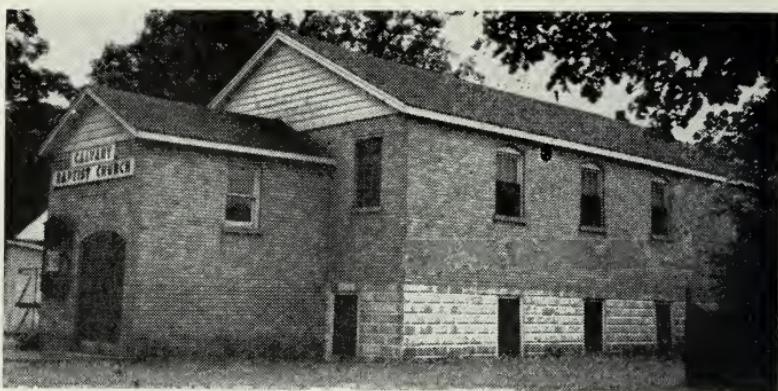
OUR CHURCHES



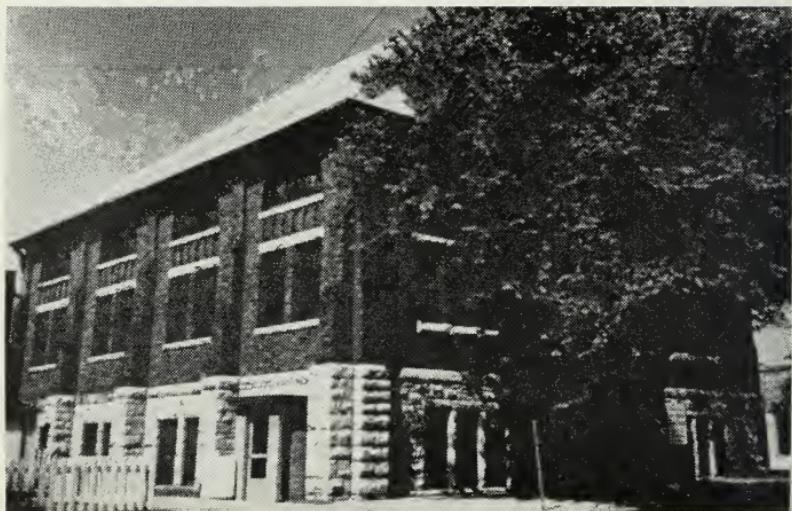
Kildare Avenue Church, Chicago



Immanuel Church, Chicago Heights



Calvary Church, Frankfort



Bethel Church, Joliet



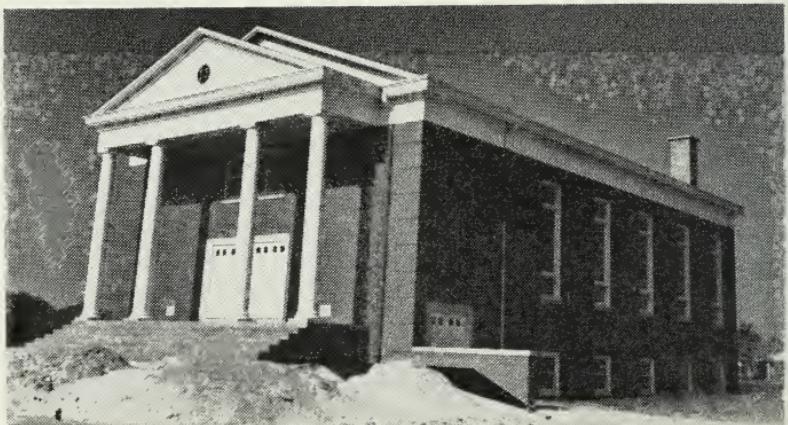
Westmont Church



Park View Church, Mokena



Hinsdale Church



Homewood Church



Bethel Church, Galesburg

Future Building Site and Youth Recreation Area

SKOKIE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

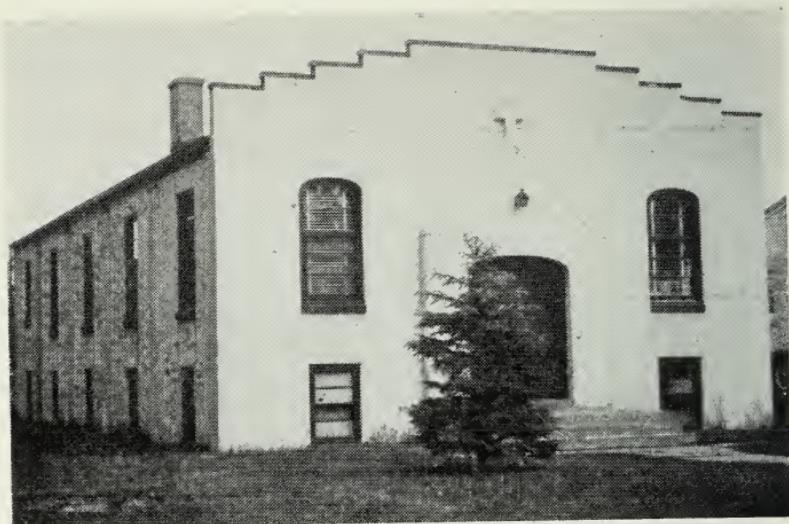
SUNDAY SERVICES BEING CONDUCTED
AT SHARP CORNER SCHOOL

Bible School 9:45 A.M. - Church Services 11:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M.
WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES AT OUR CHAPEL, 8600 MILES CENTER RD.

Seek Ye the LORD While He May be Found

A WELCOME AWAITS YOU!

Site of Future Skokie Valley Church



Beloit Road Church, West Allis, Wis.



Tabernacle Church, Kenosha, Wis.



Valley View Church, Elgin



Immanuel Church, Monmouth



Calvary Church, Sycamore



First Church, Geneva

it was reported that the Batavia church was about to disband and that the members would unite with the church in Geneva.

South Bend, Indiana — 1885

In the early eighties the attention of Swedish immigrants was directed to the growing industrial city of South Bend. Among the newcomers were a few Baptists, who under the leadership of Henry Nelson organized themselves into a church December 31, 1885. The number of charter members was nine. Henry Nelson became the first pastor. In twelve years the membership grew to about 100. During O. Ellison's ministry in the early nineties the first church building was made over into a parsonage and a new church was erected. For several years E. G. Okerlind served the church as its spiritual leader. Due to adverse circumstances the church gradually disintegrated, and at the Conference 1921 it was reported that the church property had been sold. Several attempts to revive the work in South Bend met little encouragement.

De Kalb — 1888

The First Swedish Baptist Church of De Kalb was organized with eight charter members October 24, 1888. Of these five had been converted and baptized in Sweden through the missionary labors of A. W. Backlund. The church in its early years was frequently visited by the state missionary, A. W. Backlund, and by the pastors at Sycamore. In 1891 Magnus Berglund became the pastor and during his time the church built a meetinghouse. Among the pastors that followed were John Samuelson, P. G. Nelson, A. E. Carlson, O. S. Jacobson, Hjalmar Mossberg, David Gustafson, C. E. Wedholm, C. Ivar Johnson, Reynold Lund,

Hjalmar Johnson, C. A. Wicklund and T. A. Lanes. Due to unfortunate experiences in the early forties the church ceased to exist as a Conference church, and a new work was begun in 1947.

Lake View, Chicago — 1889

As early as 1886 the First Swedish (Addison) Baptist Church, then located on the near north-side, began a mission in the Lake View district, led by Editor Eric Wingren. On November 6, 1889, the Lake View Swedish Baptist Church was organized with thirty charter members from the First church. A chapel had been built at Clifton and Barry Avenues in 1887; this was replaced by a larger edifice in 1894. The church reached its largest membership in 1905, when the roll registered 340. The ceaseless northwest trend of the members led to the merger of Lake View with the Immanuel Baptist Church on April 27, 1945, forming the Northwest Baptist Church. The following pastors served Lake View: Theodore Grandin, Nels Ek, C. W. Anderson, P. Swartz, C. O. Dahlen, Olof Hedeon, Eric Hallden, Fredrik Linden, K. E. Byleen, Victor Larson, J. G. Johnson, O. B. Anderson, and E. E. Hall.

Morris — 1889

In the fall of 1883 the missionary Anna B. Nilsson began to visit Morris and through a house to house visitation tried to reach the Swedes with the Gospel. About the same time students from Edgren's seminary began holding preaching services in Morris with the result that several turned to the Lord and believed. Twelve of the converts were immersed in the fall of 1883 and thirteen more the following year.

As members of the local American Baptist church they carried on missionary work among their countrymen for a number of years until August 17, 1889, when thirty-seven of them organized the Swedish Baptist Church. Being close to Chicago, the church was served through the years mostly by students from the seminary, including such a well known person as J. O. Backlund. In 1919 the Swedish church merged with the local American Baptist church.

Chesterton, Indiana — 1889

It seems that Indiana has never been a promising field for our Conference work. Chesterton is no exception. A church was organized there in 1889, but from the very beginning it encountered difficulties. Together with its application for membership in our Conference the statement was made that several members had left the community for lack of work and that the Sunday school had been discontinued. The pastor at La Porte divided his time between the two churches. In 1893 the number of members was only four. The church automatically disbanded.

Salem, Chicago — 1890

The Salem Swedish Baptist Church, on Chicago's southwest side, was organized October 12, 1890. For more than a quarter-century it carried on a noble work for the Lord. Removal of members to other parts of the city and elsewhere decimated the group and made termination of the work unavoidable. The church building at Oakley Avenue and 22nd Place was sold in 1910. A hall was rented at Millard Avenue and 22nd Street, but in 1917 all public services were discontinued. Finally the church decided to disband. On October 11, 1922, eleven members united with the Central Avenue

Baptist Church and others transferred their membership to other churches. The following pastors ministered to the Salem church: Ernest Hallgren, B. M. Johnson, J. S. Lundgren, Eric Anderson and Eric Rosen.

Tabernacle, Chicago — 1893

The Tabernacle Swedish Baptist Church was organized January 3, 1893, by sixteen members from the Third church. Among them were the Rev. and Mrs. A. P. Sword. The organization meeting took place in the Methodist church, South Chicago, where services were held until April of that year. The next meetingplace was the Morning Star Hall, but in 1899 the church purchased the German Baptist church building at 9131 Burley Avenue. The present location at Coles Avenue and Cheltenham Place was acquired in 1910. A. P. Sword served as pastor the first year. Others were: G. W. Lindstrom, J. E. Klingberg, Eric Scherstrom, C. A. Segerstrom, Carl Westerdahl, Victor Dahlin, Eric Anderson, F. V. Hedeen, Eric Hallden, Martin Larson and C. A. Aldeen. On September 27, 1926, the Tabernacle and the Third churches merged into the South Shore Baptist Church.

Cable — 1894

The first Baptist in this community was Oscar Hagman, who arrived there from Sweden in 1889. Through his influence some of his countrymen, who had been converted under the ministry of Swedish Methodists, were brought to the Baptist position. In May, 1890, L. L. Frisk from Rock Island came to Cable and conducted a baptismal service. Mr. Hagman and Alfred Lillieman were in charge of the work and continued after the church was organized June 9, 1894. The charter membership was seven. A church building

was purchased in September, the same year, for \$550.00. The church membership was always small and in 1912 it had dwindled to four. In 1920 the property was reported sold.

Peoria — 1894

At the Conference in 1893 a delegate from Peoria presented a request on behalf of a Swedish group, belonging to the American Baptist church, to be recognized as a church. Their request was tabled on the grounds that these members did not constitute a Swedish Baptist church. The following year a church was organized. A. P. Sword, its pastor, reported a membership of twenty-three. The next year nine were received by letter and baptism, but the total membership had been reduced to nine on account of removals, deaths and exclusions — mostly exclusions. The name of the church appears in the Conference records only once more, then reporting seven members, four of whom were nonresident.

Berwyn — 1895

Among the early settlers in Berwyn were a number of Swedish families of the Baptist faith who felt strongly led by the Spirit of God to unite in one body as a church. On March 2, 1895, the Swedish Baptist Church of Berwyn was organized by twenty-four members. E. H. East, then a student at the Morgan Park seminary, became its pastor. The first church building was a small wooden structure at 31st Street and Euclid Avenue. The present location is at Oak Park Avenue and 31st Street. The name of the church was changed in 1930 to Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church. It is now affiliated with the American Baptist Convention. Its name appeared the last time in the Conference Annual in 1953.

Immanuel, Chicago — 1907

About the turn of the century the north-side population in Chicago began to move toward the Ravenswood district. In order to meet a spiritual need, members of the First (Addison) church in 1903 started a mission and Sunday school in a rented store first on Lincoln Avenue, later on Seeley Avenue. In the fall of 1906, J. E. Tanquist, a seminary student, was in charge of the services. About a year later, or on September 29, 1907, an organizational meeting was held in the Ravenswood Baptist Church, when the Immanuel Swedish Baptist Church was formed. The charter members consisted of twenty-five from the First church, ten from Lake View, seven from other churches, one who was received on confession and five who were baptized the same day, or forty-eight in all. J. E. Tanquist became the first pastor. He was followed by Reynold Lund, Swan A. Engwall, P. Engelbrekth, John Ward and J. A. Carlson.

The church property at Wilson and Hamilton Avenues was acquired in 1908. On April 27, 1945, the Immanuel church merged with the Lake View church to become the Northwest Baptist Church. One of the leading members in the Immanuel church was Aaron Sandin, who faithfully performed many duties in the church including that of preaching whenever it became necessary to fill the pulpit.

Indiana Harbor, Indiana — 1907

Missionary Carl O. Dahlen reported to the Conference in 1907 that he had visited Indiana Harbor, but that in his opinion the opportunities for Swedish Baptist work there had passed. However, on October 20, 1907, the First Swedish Baptist Church of Indiana Harbor was organized. Its life span was brief, for on January 26, 1909, the seven

members that constituted the church, moved their membership to the Third church, Chicago.

Bethel, Chicago — 1910

The work that was begun in 1907 as a mission and Sunday school, known as Englewood on the Hill, developed in three years into a congregation known as the Bethel Swedish Baptist Church. The date of organization was October 23, 1910. Most of the thirty charter members came from the Salem (Englewood) church. The church was located at 65th and Paulina Streets. A blessed work was carried on for twenty years under the ministry of Eric Rosen, F. V. Hedeen, Eric Sjostrand and others. In 1930 the Bethel church was united with the Salem church; the membership at the time numbered seventy.

West Auburn Park, Chicago — 1910

This church was organized December 31, 1910 by fourteen members. David Holmberg served as its first pastor and after two years was succeeded by J. W. Hjertstrom. The church building was located at 70th and Elizabeth Streets. The work seemed to prosper, but soon the Pentecostal element gained control, and in 1916 it was reported to the Conference that the West Auburn Park Baptist Church had ceased to be a Baptist church. Members who were still of the Baptist persuasion sought membership in other Baptist churches. Most of them united with the Grace church.

PART THREE

ORGANIZATIONS

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SUNDAY SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS

ONE of the most active organizations within the Conference over a period of two decades was the Sunday School Union. It was organized October 21, 1892, in the Lake View church, Chicago, under the leadership of Eric Sandell, who had been appointed by the Illinois Conference to head up a committee to explore the feasibility of a Sunday school organization. After some discussion it was decided to organize. A three-fold purpose was outlined as follows:

- 1) To develop new work.
- 2) To help pastors and churches in evangelistic work.
- 3) To set up institutes for teachers' training.

A constitution was adopted and a call was extended to G. Arvid Hagstrom, then pastor of an American Baptist church at Newark, Illinois, to become Sunday school missionary, or director. It was decided to raise money by a membership fee of fifty cents a year, by taking special offerings on Children's Day and to ask the American Baptist Publication Society for financial aid. The relationship between the Union and the Conference came up for a lively discussion. It was decided that the Union become an independent body but that its annual meetings be held in connection with the annual meetings of the Conference.

Hagstrom began his work February 1, 1893, and continued until November 1, 1896, when he became pastor of the First Swedish (Addison Street) Baptist Church, Chicago. Through his leadership a deep interest in the Sunday school work was engendered. He held children's meetings, resulting in many conversions, conducted institutes for teachers and wrote numerous articles in the papers about Sunday school matters.

On January 1, 1897, E. J. Nordlander succeeded Hagstrom and was followed on June 1, 1901, by Charles Palm, who spent nearly sixteen fruitful years in that service. The American Baptist Publication Society paid half of the salary and also half of the operating cost of a Bible wagon called the "Palmquist Memorial Wagon."

With the dawn of the twentieth century a new interest in Sunday school work was manifested over the whole country. New methods were introduced, such as classes for different age-groups, institutes, rallies and conventions on a national scale. Palm caught the new spirit and enthusiastically promoted every phase of Sunday school work that to him seemed practical. Many today remember Charles Palm, his inimitable way with children and inexhaustible enthusiasm in things pertaining to Sunday school. During his time as missionary Bethany Beach at Sawyer, Michigan, was procured for the primary purpose of promoting the Sunday school work. Teachers' training classes were held there in the summer months, combining vacation with study.

At the twentieth anniversary of the Union, in 1912, there were in the Conference twenty Sunday schools with 493 teachers and 5,321 pupils. Ten men's classes had an enrollment of 292 members and five women's classes 162 members, nineteen combined classes numbered 413 members. By way of comparison, in 1954 there were listed in the General Con-

ference Annual 39 Sunday schools with an enrolment of 9,622 pupils. The proportion of Sunday school pupils to the number of Sunday schools was slightly higher in 1912.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

The Sunday School Union became quite a powerful factor within the Conference, if one can judge correctly by the programs and reports printed in the Conference annuals. Rivalry seemed to exist between the Conference and the Union. The same could also be said about the relationship between the Young People's Union and the Conference. Previous to the Conference of 1913 there had been serious discussions regarding these unions, and at this Conference it was voted to merge them with the Conference proper and to revise the constitution accordingly.

At the conference in 1917 Charles Palm submitted his final report as Sunday school missionary. In it he reviewed the accomplishments of the past fifteen years, and they were many and important. Reynold Lund, his successor, served faithfully and efficiently until April 1, 1920, when he became pastor in Waukegan. John Ward was called from his pastorate in Princeton-Kewanee to become Sunday school missionary and began his new work January 1, 1921. His duties embraced also young people's activities and missionary work in general. April 1, 1924, he became pastor in Galesburg. No one was called to succeed him as Sunday school missionary.

For a number of succeeding years the state-wide Sunday school activities seemed to be confined to a Sunday school session, usually on Saturday afternoon, at the annual conference. At the conference in 1953 an amendment to the constitution was adopted regarding the number of members

on the executive board. In part it reads: "In addition to the other nine members, one shall be an active Sunday school worker and one an active Young People's worker; these two may be either men or women." The following year Arthur Hedberg gave a report of the work done by an organization known as the Sunday School Superintendents' Council in Chicago.

Organizationally, the Sunday school activities have undergone numerous changes and have been known by different names. In the early forties the Sunday School Workers' and Superintendents' Council focused its attention on boys' and girls' camps. About 1944 the organization changed its name to the Sunday School Association of the Illinois Swedish Baptist Conference. The same year the Baptist Conference Press published *A Sunday School Manual*, which had been prepared by the Association. On March 12, 1953, the Association reorganized and changed its name to the Bible School Fellowship of the Baptist Conference of Illinois. Meetings are scheduled five times a year for the purpose of developing fellowship in the work and formulating plans for cooperative efforts. The president is the Rev. Arthur Freeburg.

CHAPTER TWELVE

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

THE modern young people's movement had its beginning among the Baptists in July, 1891, when the Baptist Young People's Union of America was organized in Chicago. A similar union for Swedish Baptist young people was envisioned by O. L. Swanson, and he was ably supported by Carl E. Oberg, Charles Palm and G. Arvid Hagstrom. The result of this combined enthusiasm was an organizational meeting of the Illinois Young People's Union in Rockford, June 24, 1893, with Hagstrom as chairman. A constitution was adopted at a later meeting, October 2, 1893. The officers of this parent organization of all the Swedish Baptist young people's unions in America were C. E. Oberg, president; Charles Palm, vice president; C. O. Dahlen, secretary; Frank Johnson, treasurer.

The purpose of this first union, as expressed in its constitution, is typical of the ideals moving the young people everywhere in forming their unions. It reads:

"The purpose of this organization shall be to bring about a closer cooperation between the Swedish young people's societies in Illinois, to foster spiritual fervor and power, to awaken more zeal for Christian service, to awaken interest in Bible study, Baptist beliefs and history, and to encourage a more active participation in the missionary labors of the denomination."

The annual meetings were held in conjunction with the

Illinois Conference, and extensive reports of the sessions were given in the printed annuals. To read these reports is a most interesting pastime. The young people fifty years ago were both educationally and spiritually minded. The leaders of the Union would arrange a series of lectures by the professors of the seminary and other qualified speakers, the subjects discussed usually being of the theological kind. The societies in Chicago would invite the seminary graduates to their services to read their graduation theses. For their more direct spiritual edification the youth of that day discussed biblical themes, testified and prayed without program help from outside sources. Their chief interest was to win other young people for Christ.

For several years after the turn of the century the Swedish language was used at most of the young people's meetings, since the majority of the members had come from Sweden. In order to win other newcomers the Young People's Union helped to support a missionary to the immigrants. For some time Miss Carrie Rosenquist and Miss Nellie Nelson devoted their time and service to the immigrant mission. At the conference 1913 the Young People's Union and also the Sunday School Union merged with the Illinois Conference; thus the youth work became a more integral part of the Conference but also less effective.

The Chicago Union

A new union came into existence four years later, when the *Chicago Ungdomsförbund* (Chicago Young People's Union) was formed, April 21, 1917. A few years later the name was changed to the Swedish Baptist Young People's Union of Chicago and Vicinity. It has been particularly active in its annual summer assemblies, the first of which

was held at Bethany Beach, Sawyer, Michigan, in 1924. Another outstanding activity in the twenties was crystalized in its great quarterly rallies which were characterized by much spiritual fervor and which never failed to attract full houses. The Union was also interested in foreign missions and raised money toward the support of Miss Victoria Christenson and the Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Holm of Assam, India. During the years 1926-1931 the Union published *Baptist Life*, edited by C. Geo. Ericson and others. In the summer of 1928, Reuben Omark served as Sunday school and youth director. The Union's first summer assembly at Round Lake was held in 1946.

Among the youth leaders of the past were Walter Carlson, William Holmquist, Clifford Sandin, Harry Widegren, Emil T. Wadling, Lottie Rylander, Ebba Brundin (Hagstrom), Alma Anderson (Johnson), Tekla Johnson and Edna Nelson.

The Western Union

The Union of Western Illinois may also be regarded as a direct descendant of the old Illinois Union. It was organized in Kewanee in 1919, comprising Galesburg, Princeton, Monmouth and Kewanee. The following year the societies of Moline, Davenport and Burlington joined the Union, and the name was changed to the Baptist Young People's Union of Western Illinois and Eastern Iowa. At the reorganization of the Iowa Baptist Young People's Union in April, 1932, the Davenport and Burlington societies withdrew and the last three words of the name were dropped. The Union is now the Western Illinois and South Eastern Iowa Conference Youth Fellowship.

The Union's first summer assembly was held at Camp Hauberg, Byron, Illinois, in 1936. Four years later junior

camps were added to the summer activities. In 1951 the camp site was changed from Hauberg to Camp Youngquist, Cameron, Illinois. Because of the great interest in the young children, the responsibility for the camps has been transferred from the Union to a board consisting of three members elected by the churches.

* * *

A Youth-Intermediate Council was formed in Chicago in 1939. The council was composed of adult advisers and the president of each junior-intermediate group. The new organization showed much promising vitality, held concerts and rallies and was hailed with great enthusiasm, but it failed to sustain interest. At the conference in 1947 William Bergstrom made a strong plea for renewed activities in this age group. In later years the junior-intermediate work has been assumed by the Chicagoland Youth Fellowship, which is now the name of the old Chicago Union.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MINISTERIAL ORGANIZATIONS

THE Ministers' Association, which is state-wide, dates back to a meeting in Joliet, June 24, 1889, when fifteen pastors and professors organized into a fellowship which in one form or another has remained until this day. The constituent members were the following: Eric Sandell, P. A. Hjelm, O. J. Engstrand, S. J. Peterson, N. N. Morten, A. W. Backlund, O. P. Peterson, G. Liljeroth, Emil Lindstrom, O. F. Carlson, J. A. Asplund, J. A. Huggerth, J. P. Forsell, A. P. Hanson and C. G. Lagergren.

From a historical sketch, covering the years 1889-1912, we gather that the ministers met in quarterly conferences in the different churches. The evening meetings were usually open to the public and conducted as revival services. The subjects discussed at the day sessions related to theology and church polity. Special problems confronting the pastors were aired sympathetically among the brethren and frequently solved. The conferences afforded the pastors cherished opportunities to fellowship with one another and to give the local churches a lift spiritually. The Association had adopted as its motto Psalm 133:1 — "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

In later years the meetings were held semi-annually, one being the annual meeting which was held in connection with the Illinois conference. The ministers' sessions preceded the

conference proper. The last of such sessions were held in 1946. At subsequent conferences the ministers have gathered for a dinner meeting to conduct necessary business. For several years the ministers have met once a year for a so called retreat — a time of fellowship, prayer and conference. The two day sessions have been held in one of the churches.

The Chicago ministers have had their own organization for many years. The time of meeting used to be the first and the third Monday of the month, but lately a luncheon meeting has been held once a month.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WOMEN'S UNION

THERE is no record available to us, writes J. O. Backlund in *Swedish Baptists in America*, as to when and how the women's work as such began in our churches. But no doubt it was very early in our history. As the work progressed we learn from field after field how women banded themselves together to sew and sacrifice in order to make possible the support of a missionary or the building of a church or chapel, or to send something for the work among the heathen.

To the Women's Missionary Society in Moline goes the honor of being the oldest organization of women in the Conference. The exact year of organization is lost in the dim past, but records reveal that this group was active in the early fifties as a sewing society. It is therefore more than one hundred years old. One of the charter members was Miss Inga Anderson, who remained an active member until her death in 1908.

The Chicago Union of Swedish Baptist Women, as it was named at its inception, is of late date. It was organized March 29, 1932. Its aim and purpose is stated in the constitution as follows: "To further spiritual and social fellowship; to provide ways and means for united benevolent and missionary denominational work as may be decided upon from time to time." The Union was, for several years,

composed of individual membership, each member paying a nominal fee.

One of the first objectives was the support of a nurse at Fridhem. A woman's chorus was organized with Mrs. Eric Scherstrom as conductor, and annual concerts were given for the benefit of the Fridhem project. From year to year the Union has added new projects to its list, such as a hospital unit at Fridhem, the Sunny Ridge Home for Children, denominational institutions and enterprises. As the activities of the Union have multiplied, the scope of the organization has also enlarged. In 1943 it voted to include all the Conference women in its membership and change the name to the Baptist Women's Union of the Illinois Conference.

A delightful time of fellowship for the women is the annual banquet in connection with the Illinois Conference. The first such banquet was held in the Emerald Avenue (Salem) Church 1950. The same year the membership in the Union exceeded the 1,000 mark. The annual receipts and disbursements have during the years mounted to considerable sums, some years close to \$10,000.

At the annual meeting in Kenosha, 1954, a plan of re-organization was adopted, by which the Conference is divided into four districts, Northern, Southern, Midwest, and Western, each having its own officers. The individual membership dues were eliminated and all the women, who belong to Conference churches, are now automatically members of the Women's Union.

A listing of all the projects of the Union makes quite an impressive array of activities. It includes the Conference Grounds, Sunny Ridge Home for Children, Fridhem, home missions, foreign missions, White Cross, Girls' Missionary Guild, Bethel College and Seminary, Canadian work, tem-

perance, literary and missionary education, development of the spiritual life. We cannot mention all the women who have been in the leadership, but the names of Mrs. Oscar E. Ostling, Mrs. J. Varner Carlson, Mrs. Wm. Turnwall and Mrs. Victor E. Ytterberg are undisputedly outstanding. Their ability as leaders and their untiring efforts have borne rich fruitage in the organizational life of our women's work throughout the Conference.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AFFILIATED BIBLE CLASSES

THE Affiliated Bible Classes comprised the Baraca and Philathea classes which a generation ago were so popular in Sunday schools all over the nation. The Chicago organization came into existence about 1915 and disbanded about 1927. The Baraca classes were for men and the Philathea classes for women. The purpose of the organization was to stimulate interest in Bible study and to win for Christ the young people who attended the classes and the social functions but had not experienced salvation.

In 1926 the Chicago group conceived the idea of raising money for an elevator in Fridhem, a project which required about \$7,500 but which was, nevertheless, accomplished with the help of the Young People's Union and other groups. Arthur E. Hedberg was the moving spirit in this undertaking.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE BIBLE WAGON MISSION

CHARLES PALM took the initiative in organizing the Bible Wagon Mission about 1903. In a comparatively short time "Uncle Palm" had raised money for the purchasing of horses, harnesses and wagon, and in order to commemorate the name of the founder of the first Swedish Baptist church in Illinois, the outfit was named the "Palmquist Memorial Wagon." The blind evangelist, A. J. Freeman, and his daughter Esther were among the earliest to use the Memorial Wagon.

The wagon was quite a novelty and created a sensation wherever it went. People came to see and hear. Some came intent on buying fish, for the colportage wagon looked like a fish wagon. Others wanted medicine. Freeman told them he was a fisher of men and that the only medicine he had was the balm of Gilead. The school children in the country districts crowded around and enjoyed the gospel of song and salvation.

Later, when John Hedeen became missionary-colporteur he used the wagon for several years and with much blessing. The maintenance of this ministry was generously shared by the American Baptist Publication Society, which also gave liberal donations of Bibles, periodicals, tracts and other good literature.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CONFERENCE BROTHERHOOD

ALTHOUGH brotherhoods have existed in the local churches for many years, the Conference-wide organization is of recent date. At the conference in Edgewater, Chicago, 1948, the beginning was made and a committee elected to get an organization under way. The committee arranged for a banquet at the Addison Street church March 12, 1949, attended by some 260 men. At this occasion the brotherhood was launched.

This organization, which was named the Illinois Baptist Conference Brotherhood, is working in cooperation with the Board of Men's Work of the General Conference and its specific objectives are the Alaska mission, boys' activities and the Round Lake camps. Milton Bloom, Bertel Chelin and J. Varner Carlson have devoted much time and talent to this work. The present chairman is Walter Johnson, Joliet.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BETHANY BEACH

IN 1905 a forty-four acre shoreland property was purchased near Sawyer, Michigan. Three men, G. Arvid Hagstrom, Charles Palm and James Magnuson, headed this project, which became known as Bethany Beach. It was originally intended to be a place of rest and recreation, where Sunday school teachers could gather for study courses in the summer. For several years Charles Palm carried on such training courses, which were well attended and greatly profitable.

The Chicago Young People's Union held its first summer assembly at Bethany Beach in 1924. All through the years it has been a popular Christian summer resort. The control is in the hands of an association composed of the property owners. The leaders, who procured Bethany Beach some fifty years ago, envisioned a kind of Baptist Chautauqua, but due to a change of ownership and leadership this plan never materialized. The last young people's assembly was held there in 1945.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CONFERENCE GROUNDS

THE question of procuring Conference-owned property for summer assemblies and children's camps came to a head at a special meeting of about fifty ministers and laymen in Chicago April 28, 1945. Following considerable discussion it was voted unanimously to recommend to the Illinois Conference the purchase of the Cadet Camp, near Round Lake, Illinois, for a price of \$15,000. It was also voted that in order to finance this purchase and the improvements needed, efforts be made to raise a total of \$30,000. The conference of 1945 approved the recommendation and appointed a camp grounds committee.

Much credit is due Roy Hedman and others working with him for spearheading this project. From the beginning the summer camps have proved a great blessing to our churches. Hundreds of boys and girls have been brought into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and scores of young Christians have dedicated their lives to His service.

Several new cabins have been erected by the churches, and many other improvements have made the camp an attractive assembly place for both young and old. During the summer of 1955 more than 800 campers availed themselves of the facilities of the camp grounds. A Sunday school has also been held at the camp under the supervision of the camp manager, Glen Forsman.

CHAPTER TWENTY

FRIDHEM

NOBODY seems to know just when Eric Rosen began to talk of an old people's home, but there was never a meeting of the General Conference when he did not plead for the project so near to his heart. Then things began to happen. First a small donation, then, in 1902, a \$1,000 donation, and already in November, the same year, the Fridhem Society was organized. On January 14, 1903, another meeting was called, when it was decided to incorporate. It was agreed that the corporate name should be Home of Rest, Swedish Baptist Home for the Aged, Fridhem. The object of the association was thus stated:

"To provide a home and place of rest for aged and destitute Swedish Baptists and other worthy persons in need of a temporary or permanent home."

In February, 1905, the home was opened in a rented house at Seeley and Sunnyside Avenues, Chicago, with Mrs. Charles Palm as matron. A more permanent location was acquired in Morgan Park the same year and in 1906 the first unit of the present building was erected. The following have served as superintendents: Mrs. Charles Palm, Miss Carrie Rosenquist, O. Ellison, Charles Palm, Albert Rose, Mrs. Carrie Rosenquist Brosell, and John Ward since 1935. Although the Fridhem Society is an independent corporation, it is operating within the framework of the Conference. All the members of the Board of Trustees are Baptists.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

SUNNY RIDGE HOME FOR CHILDREN

IN 1926, the Baptist General Conference was meeting in Kansas City, Missouri. Dr. J. E. Klingberg and his friend, the Rev. Swaney Nelson, Chicago, took a stroll between sessions. The conversation centered about God's goodness and care for the Children's Home in New Britain, Connecticut — founded twenty-three years earlier by Dr. Klingberg. Suddenly Dr. Klingberg turned to his companion and spoke of a hope that had been in his heart for some time: "Why not a children's home in Chicago?"

The two men prayed about it. Prayer brought assurance, and assurance led to action. On October 17, the same year, a two-story frame building at 627 West 63rd Place, Chicago, was dedicated as the Klingberg Children's Home of Chicago, Miss Mabel Klingberg became its matron. In 1928 the home moved to 6522 South Harvard Avenue, and in 1953 the present beautiful site at Sunny Ridge Farm, a 38-acre estate near Wheaton, Illinois, was purchased for \$133,000. It was first occupied by the Home December 28, 1953. The name was changed May 25, 1954, to Sunny Ridge Home for Children.

The following persons have served as matron or superintendent: Miss Mabel Klingberg, Miss Anna Gothberg, the Rev. Swaney Nelson, the Rev. Carl A. Olsson, Roy E.

Anderson, the Rev. Robert Klingberg, the Rev. Virgil A. Olson, and, since 1949, Wayne Swenson. In 1955 the Children's Home became affiliated with the Illinois Conference through representation on the Board of Directors. Three members of the Board are appointed by the Executive Board of the Conference.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

CHICAGO has long been the center of denominational organizations and enterprises. We can mention only a few of the more important ones in this history.

The Seminary

The Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary was founded by Dr. John Alexis Edgren in 1871. Except for the years 1884-1888, when the seminary was located temporarily in Stromsburg, Nebraska, and St. Paul, Minnesota, it remained in Chicago until 1914, when it moved to St. Paul to be identified with Bethel Academy. The combined institution is now known as Bethel College and Seminary. The seminary wielded a powerful influence on Baptist work in Illinois. Practically every church organized between 1871 and 1914 had been started or helped by the members of the faculty and the students. The Illinois Conference is therefore greatly indebted to the seminary for this valuable service.

Baptist Mission Union

The Baptist Mission Union of America was organized in Chicago March 31, 1901, with eleven persons as charter members. The object of the Union was the sending out of evangelists and missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Finnish people, using both the Finnish and the Swedish

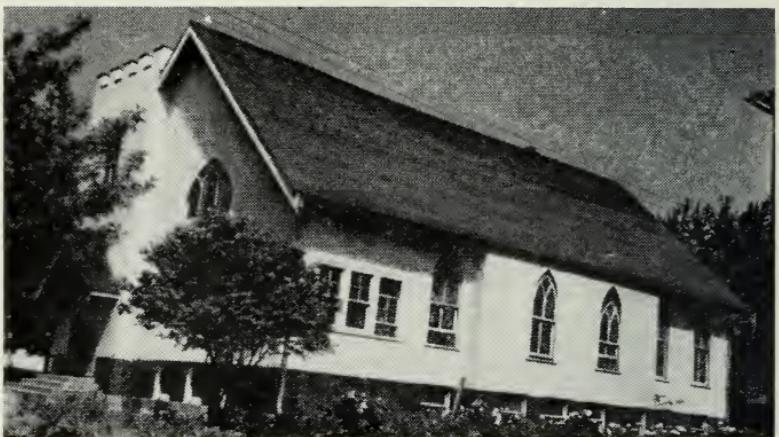
OUR CHURCHES AND INSTITUTIONS



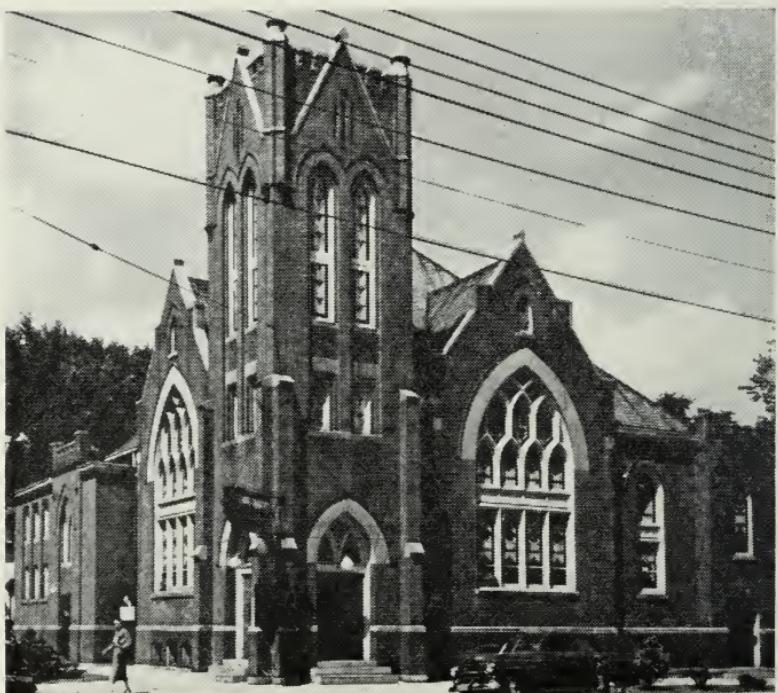
Bethany Church, Moline



Immanuel Church, Waukegan



Elim Church, Rockford



Temple Church, Rockford



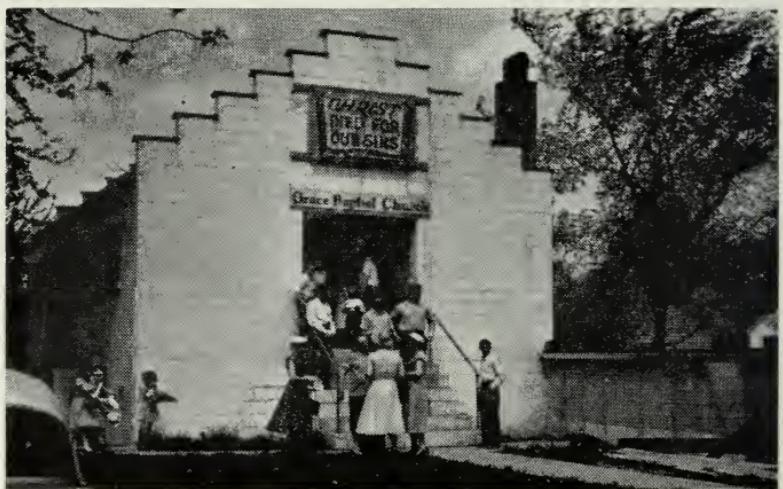
Calvary Church, Kewanee



Grove Street Church, De Kalb



Tabernacle Church, La Porte, Ind.



Grace Church, Crown Point, Ind.



Conference Grounds, Round Lake—New Dining Hall



Home for the Aged, Fridhem, Chicago



Aerial View of Sunny Ridge Home for Children, Wheaton



EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

Standing: Harold Selin, S. W. Hansen, Ed. Beatty, Harold Carlson (Treasurer), James Rentz (Financial Secretary).

Seated: Victor Sherling (Conference Missionary), Milton Bloom (Chairman), Gordon Platt (Vice Chairman), Roland H. Holmberg (Secretary).



Headquarters Building, Chicago, of Baptist General Conference of America and Baptist Conference of Illinois



MINISTERS ATTENDING THE MINISTERIAL MEETING IN MARCH, 1956

Back row: Donald Coddington, E. James Schubring, James E. Fryar, Wilbur Madsen, C. Geo. Ericson, Arthur Freeburg, William L. Fisk, Laurence Nydegger, S. Bruce Fleming, Harris Youngquist.

Middle row: Gordon G. Johnson, Aymond W. Anderson, James E. Rentz, Wm. A. Gustafson, Henry Lord, Frank Doten, Walton Verurink, Gordon Platt, Bengt I. Anderson, Albert J. Bergfalk, John A. Wilcox, James Merrill.

Seated: Arthur E. H. Barber, Herbert Skoglund, Victor Sherling, James M. Smith, Nevin Beehler, Howard Carlson, Don P. Shogren.

OUR BAPTIST HERITAGE AND FELLOWSHIP

ON AUGUST 13, 1852, AT 25TH STREET AND 5TH AVENUE, ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS, THREE IMMIGRANTS FROM SWEDEN ORGANIZED A CHURCH UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF GUSTAV PALMQUIST, A TEACHER AND PREACHER, WHO HAD BAPTIZED THEM IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AT THE FOOT OF 12TH STREET, FIVE DAYS EARLIER.

FROM THIS HUMBLE BEGINNING HAS GROWN THE MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP KNOWN AS THE BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICA. IN THE YEAR 1954 THIS FELLOWSHIP COMPRISED APPROXIMATELY 400 CHURCHES WITH 52,000 MEMBERS OF MANY NATIONAL BACKGROUNDS.

UNITEDLY THESE CHURCHES ARE ENGAGED IN MISSIONARY, EDUCATIONAL, PUBLISHING AND BENEVOLENT ENTERPRISES EXTENDING THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IS IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, AND THE EDUCATIONAL CENTER, BETHEL COLLEGE AND SEMINARY IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

OUTSTANDING DENOMINATIONAL LEADERS INCLUDE DR. JOHN ALEXIS EDGREN, FOUNDER OF BOTH THE SCHOOL AND THE FIRST PUBLISHING VENTURE OF THE CONFERENCE; DR. ERIC WINGREN, FOR FORTY YEARS THE INFLUENTIAL EDITOR OF A WEEKLY WHICH PRECEDED THE DENOMINATION'S OFFICIAL ORGAN, THE STANDARD; DR. CARL GUSTAV LAGERGREN, A THEOLOGIAN, PREACHER AND WRITER WHO FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS SERVED AS DEAN OF THE BETHEL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AND DR. GUSTAVE ARVID HAGSTROM, THE DENOMINATION'S FIRST MISSION SECRETARY AND FOR TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS PRESIDENT OF ITS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.

A DAUGHTER CHURCH OF THE EARLY ROCK ISLAND CONGREGATION THIS CHURCH IN MOLINE, BETHANY BAPTIST, ORGANIZED MAY 7, 1876, COUNTS IT A PRIVILEGE TO BE AFFILIATED WITH THE BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE. FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST, PROGRESS IN THE PRESENT, AND CHALLENGING GOALS IN THE FUTURE, WE THANK GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD.

Memorial Plaque in Bethany Church, Moline

languages. Since 1948 the Union, as well as most of the churches in the Union, have been affiliated with the Baptist General Conference.

Foreign Mission Society

The Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society was formed in Chicago in 1917. The organization was in reality a committee, consisting of Baptist leaders in Chicago, the foremost among them being Eric Wingren, editor of *Nya Wecko-Posten*. The Society was primarily concerned with missionary work in Spain and Siberia. In 1923 the work of this independent organization was transferred to the General Conference.

Baptist Headquarters

The headquarters of the Baptist General Conference of America, of which the Illinois Conference is a part, has for more than three-quarters of a century been located in Chicago. The fact that the seminary had its beginning in this metropolis may largely account for it. Then, too, the denominational papers have been published in Chicago since 1871. When the General Conference was formed in 1879, it seemed logical that the missionary and publication work should be carried on from Chicago. Obviously, the Illinois Conference has benefited by having the denominational headquarters within its borders. At the headquarters building, 5750 North Ashland Avenue, is an office for the Missionary of the Illinois Conference, and there the executive board and various committees usually hold their meetings.

PART FOUR

PERSONALITIES

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

CONFERENCE MISSIONARIES

AT LEAST twenty-six missionaries and colporteurs have served the Illinois Conference during the past century. There may have been more, but we have not been able to find all the records from the early years of the Conference. Doubtless many of the pastors of the new churches gave much of their time to itinerant work. From the beginning and until John Hedeen finished his life work the American Baptist Publication Society assisted in the support of the missionaries. The colporteurs, such as Rundquist, Palm, Wilson, Freeman and Hedeen carried with them a supply of Bibles, devotional books, tracts and other Christian literature, which they sold or distributed free in behalf of ABPS. Briefly we are mentioning the following missionaries and the years they served:

N. J. Rundquist, 1854-1861, was the first colporteur and missionary in our Conference. He was also the first servant of God to be ordained to the Gospel ministry within our fellowship.

A. Levin, 1864, served only six months.

P. U. Wallberg, 1866-1867. The conference of 1867 voted to pay him \$90.00 for one year's work as missionary.

Olof Lindh, 1868-1869, had the true spirit of a pioneer. His most outstanding ministry was in the New England states, but as missionary and pastor he also made a lasting impact upon the Baptist work in our state.

N. E. Axling, 1869, served only one year as missionary. He assisted in organizing several churches in Illinois and other mid-western states.

C. G. Johanson, 1869, was appointed by the Conference at the same time as Axling. The new settlements on the western frontier constituted the special field of the missionaries.

N. E. Nelson, 1885, served one year. He was then called by the newly organized church in Evanston to become its first pastor.

A. W. Backlund, 1887-1889, came from the pastorate of the Salem (Englewood) church to be missionary in Illinois. Later he spent a long and fruitful ministry on the west coast.

P. G. Holmberg, 1889-1890, was pastor of Grace (Second) church, Chicago, when he was called to minister to the entire Conference. He served only about one year in that capacity. Following a year as pastor of the old Salem church, he entered upon his real life work, which was that of pastor of the Bethel church, Joliet, from 1891 to 1926, a period of thirty-five years. It is worthy of note that three generations of the Holmbergs have been pastors in Illinois: Per Gustav, his son David, and grandson Roland, who since 1941 has served the Bethel church, Galesburg.

A. P. Hanson, 1892-1897, was missionary in the mid-western states, including Illinois. He was appointed by the American Baptist Home Mission Society to work among all nationalities, but he never neglected an opportunity to minister in a special way to his countrymen. Prior to his work as missionary he had been pastor in Chicago, Princeton, Morris, and Joliet.

G. Arvid Hagstrom, 1893-1896, was the first Sunday school missionary in Illinois, having been engaged by the newly organized Sunday School Union. Hagstrom introduced new methods and plans for effective Sunday school work

and made the churches conscious of its great importance.

E. J. Nordlander, 1896-1901, succeeded Hagstrom as Sunday school missionary. He also served as pastor of churches in Chicago and Rockford.

Charles Palm, 1901-1916, who spent sixteen fruitful years as Sunday school missionary, was loved by young and old.

Ragnar A. Arlander, 1901-1903, began his long and effective ministry in Illinois, first as pastor of the Third church, then as Conference missionary and two years later as pastor in Evanston. During the last ten years of his active life he was secretary of missions for the General Conference.

John A. Westin, 1903-1905, was gifted as singer and guitar player as well as preacher and soul-winner.

A. W. Wilson, 1904, a layman from Moline who served three months as the first colporteur and missionary in charge of the "Palmquist Memorial Wagon."

A. J. Freeman, 1904-1905, succeeded Wilson. This blind evangelist and his daughter Esther won many souls for Jesus Christ. When calls from other parts of the country began coming to Freeman for evangelistic meetings, he resigned as colporteur.

C. O. Dahlen, 1906-1907, poet, composer and preacher, served a brief period as missionary, or until he accepted a call to the Lake View church, Chicago.

John Hedeen, 1906-1942, served thirty-six years, longer than any other state missionary in the denomination.

C. E. Wedholm, 1907-1913, succeeded Dahlen. This energetic and devoted missionary was a great blessing to small and struggling churches throughout the Conference.

Reynold Lund, 1917-1920, became Palm's successor as Sunday school missionary. He served diligently and was well liked by everybody. Lund was also known as an artist.

A. Liliemark, 1919-1921, served as missionary in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. The Illinois Conference and the Lower Michigan Conference shared in his support.

John Ward, 1921-1924, had as his particular responsibility the Sunday school and youth work in the Conference. He has spent his entire ministerial life in Illinois, the last twenty years as superintendent of Fridhem.

Axel Rendahl, 1930-1933, was called to minister especially in the area comprising eastern Illinois, northern Indiana and southern Michigan. He did a good work in a difficult field.

G. E. Wallendorf, 1935-1936, succeeded Rendahl and worked in cooperation with the Chicago Young People's Union. Having been pastor in Illinois altogether twenty-five years, he knew the field and gave all his strength and devotion to his task.

Victor Sherling, general missionary since 1944, hails from Napoleon, North Dakota, where he was born September 23, 1911. He graduated from Bethel Seminary in 1935 and from Northwestern Evangelical Seminary in 1936; he also studied at University of Minnesota. Following pastorate in Jamestown, North Dakota; Polson, Montana; and Pearson, Washington, he served as missionary in Spokane and vicinity under the American Sunday School Union 1942-1944. Our missionary has had the joy of seeing his work prosper and develop more than during any other decade in the history of the Conference.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

SOME OF THE LEADERS

IT IS NOT possible, within the scope of this history, to give due tribute to all the good ministers and laymen, who in a special way have contributed to the progress of our Conference. We can mention but a few of those who have gone to their reward, and we do it with apology to those others who perhaps should have been included.

Gustaf Palmquist

First on the list is Gustaf Palmquist, who is rightly called the founder of Swedish Baptist work in America. He was born in the province of Småland, Sweden, May 26, 1812. He became a well known teacher and singer and somewhat of a leader among the pietists, who were adherents of a spiritual movement in the state church.

Palmquist left Sweden for America in 1851 and came to Galesburg, where he was placed in charge of a Lutheran church. Coming in contact with the American Baptist church there he was led to examine the basic principles of the Baptist faith, and on June 27, 1852, was baptized on confession of his faith. About a month later he was ordained to the Gospel ministry.

Shortly after his ordination Palmquist proceeded to Rock Island and there began his ministry among his countrymen. In August, 1852, three of his converts were bap-

tized and organized into a church. The years that followed were filled with sacrificial missionary labor. Broken in health he returned to Sweden in 1857. He died in Stockholm ten years later, September 18, 1867, at the age of fifty-five. His real monument is the Baptist General Conference of America. Palmquist never married.

Anders Wiberg

Anders Wiberg, born in the province of Hälsingland, Sweden, July 17, 1816, was a Lutheran minister before he was baptized on July 23, 1852, by F. O. Nilsson, then pastor of the Baptist church in Copenhagen, Denmark. Wiberg was at that time on his way to America to restore his failing health. Here he was engaged by the Baptist Mariners' Church in New York as colporteur and missionary among the Scandinavians.

Following his ordination by the Mariners' church, Wiberg made a missionary tour through the middle west, preaching, teaching and aiding in the organization of churches. In 1855 he returned to Sweden with his American bride but made a second visit in America eight years later, resuming his labors for another period of three years. In June, 1864, he served as moderator at the meeting when the Illinois-Iowa Conference adopted its constitution, which had been written by him.

Wiberg returned to Sweden 1866, where he spent the rest of his life as the recognized leader of his fellow-Baptists for the best part of a generation. He died November 5, 1887. A great and good man had departed from the land of the living.

Fredrik Olaus Nilsson

Back of the small beginning of Baptist work in Sweden is F. O. Nilsson, a sailor. He was born July 28, 1809, on

Vendelsö, an island in the Cattegat. In 1834 he was converted in New York, returned to Sweden in 1839 to engage in colportage work among his friends, the sailors. In 1842 he was called by the Seamen's Friend Society in New York to serve as its missionary in Gothenburg.

On August 1, 1847, Nilsson went to Hamburg to be baptized by J. G. Oncken in the river Elbe. After this experience he returned to his home again, where among others he won two of his own brothers for Christ and his new faith. The first baptismal service in Sweden took place September 21, 1848, at Vallerstvik, in the province of Halland, and the same day the first Baptist church in Sweden was organized. The Baptists were persecuted, some, including Nilsson, were imprisoned, and in 1851 he was banished from his country.

Nilsson was a pioneer in a very real sense both in Sweden and America. Here he spent his later years at his home in Houston, Minnesota, where he went to his reward October 21, 1881. Nilsson was one of the leaders at the organizational meeting of our Conference one hundred years ago.

Nils Johan Rundquist

Among the quietly constructive men, who labored conscientiously and with little fanfare in the early pioneer days, was N. J. Rundquist, the fourth in point of time of a long line of Swedish-American Baptist preachers. He was born in the province of Västergötland, Sweden, September 6, 1811, sailed for America in 1851 and came to Andover, Illinois. Later he made his home in Moline, went to hear Gustaf Palmquist preach, was converted and, on October 2, 1853, baptized into the membership of the Rock Island church.

A few months later Rundquist was licensed to preach. In the early winter of 1854 he was commissioned by the American Baptist Publication Society as colporteur, a position he held for seven years. He was ordained at the first conference, 1856. In the early seventies he served as pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church at Altona. When the Moline church was organized in 1876, Rundquist became a charter member. Having served his Lord and Savior faithfully and successfully as missionary, pastor or deacon he went to his eternal rest on August 5, 1892.

Olof Lindh

Much of the pioneer work in Illinois was done by Olof Lindh, who came to Chicago from Sweden in 1866 and delivered his first sermon in America in the Danish Baptist church, Chicago, July 22, the same year. He was born in the province of Hälsingland, Sweden, September 24, 1835, was converted at the age of twenty-four and baptized in 1860.

Together with others, Lindh became instrumental in organizing the Addison Street Baptist Church, Chicago, in 1866. After a year as pastor in Altona and another year as missionary in Illinois-Iowa, he became pastor in Moline, where he remained for six years. Then followed three years in Sweden as evangelist and several years in the New England states as pastor and missionary.

As a soul-winner he experienced much success and as an organizer of churches he has no equal. He went to his reward at Sioux City, Iowa, October 5, 1912, while on a preaching tour.

John Alexis Edgren

As pastor, editor, seminary dean and scholar, Dr. J. A. Edgren wielded a wholesome and deeply spiritual influence

upon the Conference for fifteen years. The records show that the Conference often sought his counsel when facing problems related to doctrine and policy. Dr. Edgren served the Addison Street church as pastor one year (1870-1871) and resigned when he founded the school that is now Bethel Theological Seminary. The same year (1871) Dr. Edgren launched the first denominational paper *Zions Wäktare* (Watchman of Zion). He is one of the tall figures in the history of our denomination. He was born in the province of Värmland, Sweden, February 20, 1839, and died in Oakland, California, January 26, 1908.

Eric Wingren

Wingren came to America from Sweden in 1880 for a threefold purpose: To become pastor of the Grace church, Chicago; to assist Dr. Edgren as teacher in the seminary, and to aid in the publishing of *Evangelisk Tidskrift* (Evangelical Journal). After some time he turned his entire attention to journalism and for more than forty years published and edited *Nya Vecko-Posten* (New Weekly Mail), which became the successor to Edgren's paper. It can truthfully be said that Wingren and his paper gave direction and a balanced faith and message to all Conference Baptists and not the least to the Illinois constituency. Dr. Wingren was born in the province of Jämtland, Sweden, December 17, 1843, and died in Chicago, September 19, 1922. His paper was merged with *The Standard* in 1918.

Frank Peterson

As a small boy in 1854 Frank Peterson stood on the banks of the Mississippi at Rock Island and watched Gustaf Palmquist immerse his father in the river. Tears came to

his eyes, for he thought that his dad was put under for good. Frank Peterson was born in the province of Öster-götland, Sweden, November 19, 1847. He came with his parents to America in 1852, and Rock Island became their first dwelling place in the new world. Two years later the family moved to Village Creek, Iowa, where Frank was converted and baptized in 1861.

At the age of sixteen he enlisted in the Ninth Iowa Cavalry and served in the ranks to the end of the Civil War. Then followed years of study and preparation for the Gospel ministry. He held successful pastorates until 1890 when he was appointed district secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and served in various capacities until his death July 30, 1929. He was an attractive and popular speaker, a talented organizer and a missionary statesman.

Oscar and Emily Swanson

When the young pastor and his wife, who were serving the Sycamore church, announced to their members that they were going to the mission field in far away Assam, India, a current of new spiritual life was felt all through the Conference churches. It was in 1893 that Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Swanson began their lifelong service under the appointment of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Theirs was an unusually rich and blessed ministry, which lasted forty-three years, or until 1936 when they retired.

A highlight at each conference was the reading of a letter from the Swansons, or their appearance in person when they were home on furlough, for the Illinois Conference considered them in a very real sense its own missionaries. Swanson was born in the province of Västergötland, Sweden, February 11, 1867. He came to Moline as a young

boy. Mrs. Swanson was born in Moline, August 13, 1867. They were united in marriage May 26, 1892. Mrs. Swanson died in Chicago December 30, 1945, Dr. Swanson returned to Assam and died there July 17, 1949.

Carl Gustaf Lagergren

During a quarter of a century Dr. C. G. Lagergren was actively interested in the Illinois Conference. He was a leader without peer. As dean of the seminary in Morgan Park, Chicago, from 1889 to 1914, and continuing in the same capacity in St. Paul, Minnesota, until 1922, Dr. Lagergren was looked upon as educator, molder of preachers and authority on matters spiritual. He was born in the province of Jämtland, Sweden, June 21, 1846. In his ninety-sixth year he quietly fell asleep in Jesus, October 27, 1941, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Eric Sandell

Dr. Sandell was a rare individual. His formal education was limited, he was practically a self-made man. Yet, by reason of an extraordinary brilliant mind and amazing capacity for hard work, he became one of the best informed persons in many different branches of knowledge in his day and generation. He was pastor of two churches in Chicago, Grace and Temple, and from 1887 to 1895 and from 1907 to 1918 seminary professor. For more than twenty years he served the Illinois Conference in many ways of leadership. Born in the province of Hälsingland, Sweden, January 26, 1856, he came to America in 1880, and died in Tampa, Florida, February 12, 1918.

Olof Hedeen

Dr. Hedeen was the third member of the notable Morgan Park seminary trio. University educated in Sweden, he

arrived in America in 1883 and came to Chicago in 1896 in response to a call to become a professor in the seminary. When the school moved to St. Paul in 1914, Dr. Hedeen remained in Chicago. For seven years he was pastor of the Salem (Englewood) church and during the years 1921-30 secretary of missions of the General Conference. He was born in the province of Jämtland, Sweden, June 19, 1860, and died in Chicago June 15, 1936.

Charles Palm

Charles Palm, lovingly known by many as "Uncle Palm," was Sunday school and young people's missionary in the Illinois Conference from 1901 to 1916. It was a period when the Sunday school and youth movements were going strong in American churches, and Charles Palm was wide awake to all new ideas that to him seemed feasible. He had a great capacity for friendship, and all ages, including little children, were attracted to him.

Palm was born in the province of Västmanland, Sweden, June 28, 1859. He came to America in 1880, arriving in Chicago in June. As pastor he served several churches, and following his long ministry as missionary in Illinois he was for eight years superintendent of Fridhem. After a long illness he quietly answered the summons February 18, 1946, at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

A. J. Freeman

Blind A. J. Freeman was for a generation the most effective evangelist in our denomination. It was here in Illinois he began his marvelous career. Born in the province of Västergötland, Sweden, December 8, 1866, he came to

the United States in 1887 and made his home in Moline, Illinois. Accidentally he lost his physical sight in June, 1895, but in the providence of God he received his spiritual sight a few months later. He was baptized by Eric Sandell in the Roseland (Temple) church, Chicago, in 1904 and almost immediately started his evangelistic ministry. With his daughter Esther as guide and assistant — she was then but a young girl — he came as a flaming evangel to our churches, telling in testimony and song with unusual effect the old story of salvation. When Esther no longer could follow him, Mrs. Freeman accompanied him on his journeys, and the last years he traveled alone. Thousands of people were led to spiritual light through the song and testimony of blind Freeman. He passed away in Moline November 25, 1933.

John Hedeen

John Hedeen had the distinction of being a state missionary over a longer period than any other missionary in the General Conference. Faithfully and unselfishly he served the Illinois Conference as missionary-colporteur thirty-six years, or from 1906 to 1942, when he had reached the ripe old age of eighty-two. Suffering a stroke he retired from active service and entered Fridhem. He devoted a certain portion of each day to correspondence and to writing articles for *The Standard*.

Born in the province of Dalarne, Sweden, February 27, 1860, Hedeen was converted in 1878 and baptized four years later. He came to the United States in 1890, graduated from the Morgan Park seminary, 1893, and served as pastor at Daggett, Michigan, until 1895. After having served two years at Grove City, Minnesota, and another year at Daggett, he was engaged as missionary in Finland for two years.

Then followed five years as pastor in San Jose, California. From there he entered upon his main life work, that of Conference missionary in Illinois.

On the Lord's Day of August 7, 1949, the sun of his earthly life set, but the memory of a good and useful life spent for God will remain as an afterglow for a long time. Mrs. Hedeen preceded him in death in 1929.

John Swanson

John Swanson held the record as Sunday school superintendent in the Moline church and also in the Conference. Selected to that office in 1877, he served for thirty-six years, or until his death in 1913. He was also a charter member of the Moline church. His influence as a Sunday school man and as a Christian lay worker extended far beyond the local field. As a member of the board of the Illinois Sunday School Association as well as of the Illinois Conference Executive Board, he made permanent and constructive contributions to the Kingdom of God. Swanson was president of the Moline Board of Education and a member of that board for twenty-two years.

Carl Mehlin

About two weeks before the Conference convened for its annual meeting 1936, its faithful and efficient treasurer Carl Mehlin passed away suddenly on May 4. For almost twenty-six years he served as treasurer. He was also treasurer of the mission committee of the General Conference and a trusted holder of important offices in the Addison Street church. He was born in Sweden, January 5, 1872, and came to this country at the age of nineteen.

Martin A. Rosenlund

This servant of God merits a special mention in the history of the Illinois Conference. Being a printer, author

and editor, he supplied our missionaries, free of charge, with many thousands of tracts and booklets over a long period of years. Acknowledging the great value of this ministry, the Conference at its annual meetings repeatedly adopted resolutions of appreciation to Mr. Rosenlund. A member of the Salem (Englewood) church, he was born in Sweden December 4, 1886, and passed away in Chicago May 14, 1947.

Oscar E. Ostling

This scholarly and devoted layman distinguished himself especially in the field of Sunday school work. For twenty-five years (1910-1935) he served as superintendent of the Salem (Englewood) Sunday school and for more than thirty years as deacon of the same church. He was an active member of the Illinois Conference board and in 1944 he served as moderator of the Baptist General Conference of America. Born in Sweden, July 23, 1879, he came at the age of nine to Chicago, where he after more than half a century of Christian service went to his reward April 5, 1951.

PART FIVE

APPENDICES

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE CONFERENCE CHURCHES AT A GLANCE

IN OUR BRIEF historical sketches of the churches, we made mention of only the churches within the framework of the Illinois Conference. During the first two years, 1856-1858, the Conference was composed of churches in three states, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. During the following twenty-five years, 1858-1883, the Conference comprised two states, Illinois and Iowa. But before other state conferences were formed, several churches in distant states affiliated themselves with our Conference.

The Conference minutes of 1869 record that the newly organized Baptist church at Swede Center, Neosho county, Kansas, applied for membership. The Baptist church (now Broadway) in Kansas City, Missouri, became affiliated with our Conference in the middle seventies. It was organized in 1872. The fellowship of these two churches — and there may have been others in Kansas and Missouri — continued until the Kansas Conference was formed in 1881.

For a few years the First Baptist Church of Sister Bay, Wisconsin, was a part of our Conference. This church, organized in 1877, affiliated with the Wisconsin Conference shortly after the Conference organized in 1884.

The Bethel Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio, became a member of the Illinois Conference in 1891. It was organ-

ized in 1889. In 1900 it united with one of the eastern conferences.

Though the following list of churches may not be complete, it will show, nevertheless, what an important place the Baptist Conference of Illinois has filled during the past century. The three periods are indicated together with the churches that belonged to the Conference in each period.

The first figure is the year of organization. The asterisk (*) and the year in parenthesis mark the churches that have disbanded, or been merged with some other church, or affiliated with some other conference.

THE ILLINOIS-IAWA-MINNESOTA CONFERENCE 1856-1858

- 1852 — Rock Island, Ill.
- 1853 — Village Creek, Iowa
- 1853 — Houston, Minn.
- 1853 — Chisago Lake, Minn.
- 1854 — Chicago, Ill.
- 1854 — Burlington, Iowa
- 1854 — New Sweden, Iowa
- 1855 — Scandia, Minn.
- 1856 — Swede Bend, Iowa
- 1857 — Galesburg, Ill.
- 1857 — Wastedo, Minn.
- 1858 — Carver, Minn.

THE ILLINOIS-IAWA CONFERENCE 1858-1883

- 1852 — Rock Island, Ill.
- 1853 — Village Creek, Iowa
- *1854 — Chicago, Ill. (1864)
- 1854 — New Sweden, Iowa

- 1856 — Swede Bend, Iowa
- *1857 — Galesburg, Ill. (Early '60's)
- 1866 — Addison Street, Chicago
- 1867 — Altona, Ill.
- 1868 — Kiron, Iowa
- 1869 — Swede Center, Kansas
- 1869 — Forest City, Iowa
- 1872 — Kansas City, Mo.
- 1874 — Grace, Chicago
- 1874 — Sioux City, Iowa
- 1876 — Moline, Ill.
- 1877 — Princeton, Ill.
- 1877 — Sister Bay, Wis.
- 1880 — Temple, Rockford, Ill.
- 1881 — Joliet, Ill.
- 1881 — New Bedford, Ill.
- 1881 — Burlington, Iowa
- 1881 — Des Moines, Iowa
- 1882 — Third, Chicago
- 1882 — Temple, Chicago
- 1883 — Batavia, Ill.

THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE 1883-1956

- *1852 — First, Rock Island (1930)
- 1866 — Addison Street, Chicago
- *1867 — Altona (About 1915)
- 1874 — Grace, Chicago
- 1876 — Bethany, Moline
- *1877 — Princeton (1942)
- 1880 — Temple, Rockford
- 1881 — Bethel, Joliet
- *1881 — New Bedford (1915)

- *1882 — Third, Chicago (1926)
- 1882 — Temple, Chicago
- *1883 — Batavia (1903)
- 1884 — Tabernacle, La Porte, Ind.
- 1885 — Salem, Chicago
- *1885 — South Bend, Ind. (1921)
- 1886 — Calvary, Evanston
- 1888 — Bethel, Galesburg
- 1888 — Immanuel, Monmouth
- 1888 — Calvary, Sycamore
- *1888 — De Kalb (1947)
- *1889 — Cleveland, Ohio (1900)
- *1889 — Lake View, Chicago (1945)
- *1889 — Morris (1919)
- *1889 — Chesterton, Ind. (1893)
- *1890 — Salem, Chicago (1922)
- 1891 — Central Avenue, Chicago
- 1891 — Fairfield Avenue, Chicago
- *1893 — Tabernacle, Chicago (1926)
- *1894 — Cable (About 1913)
- *1894 — Peoria (About 1897)
- 1894 — First, Geneva
- *1895 — Oak Park Avenue, Berwyn (1953)
- 1895 — Immanuel, Waukegan
- 1899 — Elim, Chicago
- 1901 — Calvary, Kewanee
- 1902 — Immanuel, Chicago Heights
- 1904 — Bethel, Chicago
- 1904 — Tabernacle, Kenosha, Wis.
- 1905 — Hinsdale
- *1907 — Indiana Harbor, Ind. (1909)
- *1907 — Immanuel, Chicago (1945)
- 1909 — Edgewater, Chicago

- *1910 — Bethel, Chicago (1930)
- *1910 — West Auburn Park, Chicago (1916)
- 1917 — Elim, Rockford
- 1923 — Westmont
- 1926 — South Shore, Chicago
- 1939 — Calvary, Frankfort
- 1945 — Northwest, Chicago
- 1947 — Grove Street, De Kalb
- 1948 — First, Markham
- 1949 — West Allis, Wis.
- 1949 — Jeffery Manor, Chicago
- 1950 — Grace, Crown Point, Ind.
- 1950 — Edgewood, Naperville
- 1952 — Skokie Valley, Skokie
- 1952 — Homewood
- 1954 — Park View, Mokena
- 1954 — Valley View, Elgin
- 1955 — Hillside

Additions

The following churches are being received into the fellowship of the Illinois Conference this year:

- 1864 — Kildare Avenue, Chicago
- 1956 — Riverdale

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

WHERE THE ANNUAL CONFERENCES HAVE BEEN HELD

1856 — Rock Island, Illinois	1879 — Village Creek
1857 — Village Creek, Iowa	1880 — Addison, Chicago
1858 — New Sweden, Iowa	1881 — Princeton, Illinois
1859 — Rock Island	1882 — Temple, Rockford
1860 — Rock Island	1883 — Village Creek
1861 — No Conference	1884 — Moline
1862 — Rock Island	1885 — Rock Island
1863 — Village Creek	1886 — Temple, Rockford
1864 — Village Creek	1887 — Third, Chicago
1865 — Moline, Illinois	1888 — Grace, Chicago
1866 — Village Creek	1889 — Joliet
1867 — New Sweden	1890 — Salem (Englewood)
1868 — Altona, Illinois	Chicago
1869 — Rock Island	1891 — Moline
1870 — Swede Bend, Iowa	1892 — Third, Chicago
1871 — Rock Island-Moline	1893 — Temple, Chicago
1872 — Village Creek	1894 — South Bend, Indiana
1873 — Village Creek	1895 — Salem, Chicago
1874 — Rock Island	1896 — Moline
1875 — Moline	1897 — Temple, Rockford
1876 — Village Creek	1898 — Temple, Chicago
1877 — Addison, Chicago	1899 — Central, Chicago
1878 — Rock Island	1900 — Lake View, Chicago

1901 — Salem, Chicago	1929 — Temple, Chicago
1902 — Moline	1930 — Immanuel, Chicago
1903 — Fairfield, Chicago	1931 — Addison, Chicago
1904 — Joliet	1932 — Moline
1905 — Temple, Rockford	1933 — Joliet
1906 — Moline	1934 — Elim, Chicago
1907 — Central, Chicago	1935 — Temple, Rockford
1908 — Evanston	1936 — Kenosha, Wisconsin
1909 — Temple, Chicago	1937 — Evanston
1910 — Berwyn, Illinois	1938 — Lake View, Chicago
1911 — Lake View, Chicago	1939 — Fairfield, Chicago
1912 — Galesburg, Illinois	1940 — Joliet
1913 — Elim, Chicago	1941 — Grace, Chicago
1914 — Temple, Rockford	1942 — Moline
1915 — Edgewater, Chicago	1943 — Central, Chicago
1916 — Central, Chicago	1944 — Kenosha
1917 — Moline	1945 — Lake View, Chicago
1918 — Joliet	1946 — Temple, Chicago
1919 — Lake View, Chicago	1947 — Monmouth, Illinois
1920 — Grace, Chicago	1948 — Edgewater, Chicago
1921 — Evanston	1949 — Galesburg
1922 — Temple, Rockford	1950 — Salem, Chicago
1923 — Edgewater, Chicago	1951 — Northwest, Chicago
1924 — Moline	1952 — Temple, Rockford
1925 — Central, Chicago	1953 — Elim, Chicago
1926 — Salem, Chicago	1954 — Kenosha
1927 — Lake View, Chicago	1955 — Sycamore, Illinois
1928 — Galesburg	1956 — Moline

STATISTICS AT THE CENTENNIAL

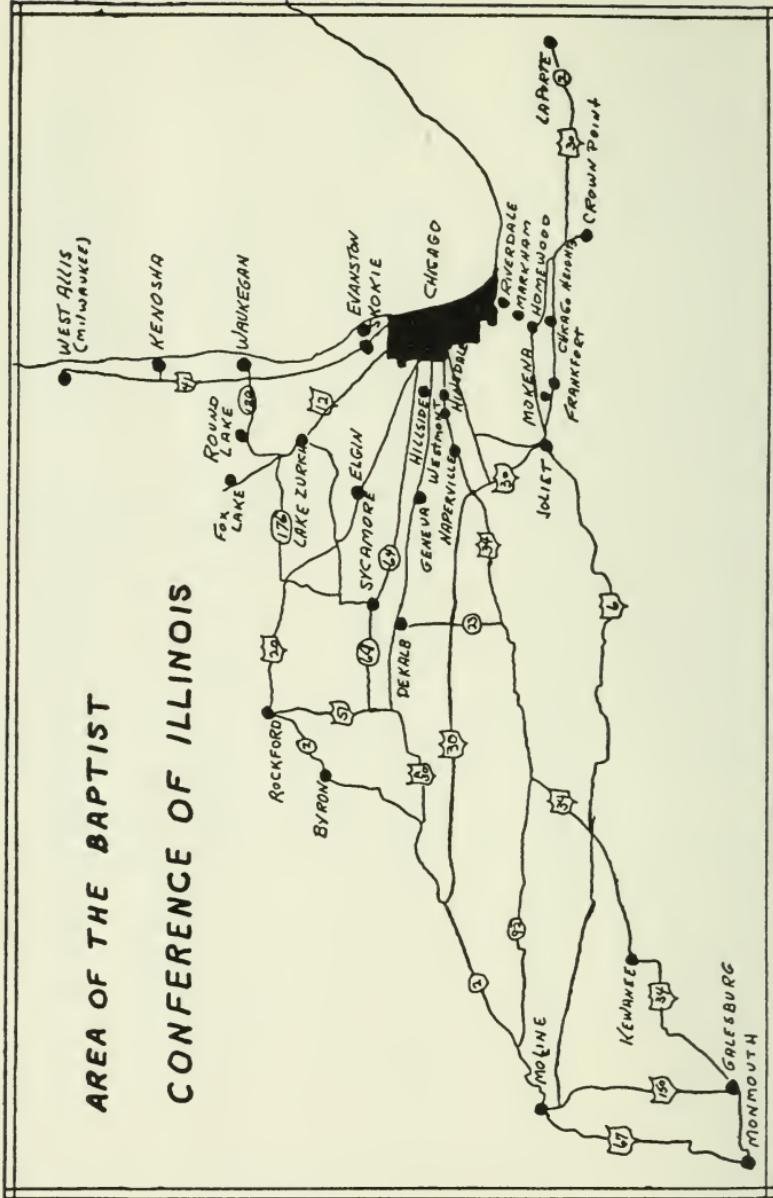
Name of Church	Member-ship	Sunday School	For All Purposes
Chicago			
Addison	478	459	\$ 77,257.10
Bethel	252	255	33,404.94
Central Ave.	487	480	103,195.48
Edgewater	298	308	43,085.43
Elim	282	383	38,168.32
Fairfield	125	250	11,292.06
Grace*	241	251	20,675.66
Jeffery Manor	56	107	5,566.43
Northwest	572	570	77,935.20
Temple	202	328	149,654.70
Salem	570	567	123,367.40
South Shore	192	163	18,491.62
Chicago Heights	177	207	7,846.47
Crown Point, Ind.....	77	115	7,271.40
De Kalb	65	221	10,244.54
Elgin-Valley View	40	119	7,847.27
Evanston	213	200	16,866.26
Frankfort*	52	136	4,684.17
Galesburg	273	281	19,587.18
Geneva	78	104	8,083.86
Hillside	29	132	7,622.77
Hinsdale	68	132	21,512.79
Homewood	62	187	116,642.37
Joliet	248	226	19,886.50

Name of Church	Member-ship	Sunday School	For All Purposes
Kenosha, Wis.	201	306	28,201.80
Kewanee	79	119	5,382.40
La Porte, Ind.	73	107	5,724.30
Markham*	36	127	10,083.84
Mokena	24	108	13,116.00
Moline	303	350	162,288.33
Monmouth	174	226	9,599.28
Naperville	22	67	4,702.45
Rockford			
Elim	126	230	15,518.28
Temple	484	610	40,165.00
Skokie	179	318	34,093.47
Sycamore*	110	140	16,686.00
Waukegan	474	843	78,119.46
West Allis, Wis.	34	157	10,239.18
Westmont	135	127	10,980.69
39 Churches	7,591	10,016	\$395,090.40

*Report for 1954

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